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The Sermon on the Mount

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The Sermon on the Mount

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Dr. W. A. VISSER 't HOOFT *Editor*

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EDITORIAL

The King's Speech

It is no mere coincidence that in the same summer the Federation is devoting its yearly Conference to the study of the Bible and giving a whole number of The Student World to the study of the Sermon on the Mount. These signs reflect the reawakening interest of a good many of our national S.C.M.s in the Bible; an interest which springs from a growing realization that the Word of God is the one Rock on which we must build if we are to withstand the stresses of life and the storms of history.

But why have we chosen the Sermon on the Mount? Pastor Rielhmüller's article stresses the fact that no other speech can compare with it in power and influence, even outside the bounds of Christendom, and at the same time that no other speech has been so distorted and misinterpreted. The Sermon on the Mount is indeed one of the greatest stumbling-blocks in the Bible, even — perhaps especially — for sincere Christians. And it is with its teaching — as D. T. Niles points out — that non-Christians generally begin their discussion of the claims made by Christians for their faith. So, both for our own lives

and for our missionary work in the University field, it is essential for us to try to see clearly what the Sermon on the Mount really is.

The articles in this number do indeed differ widely at many important points. A good deal of the difference, however, arises from the fact that they are trying to answer quite different questions. And although there can be no doubt that they reflect the irreducible confessional differences within Christendom, there can be no doubt either that they combine to let us see the Sermon on the Mount as a Call to the Life of Faith.

Pastor Rielhmüller and Professor Schniewind show us the Sermon as Good News — the News of the definite establishment of Divine standards in the estimation of human relationships and achievements; the Constitution of the Kingdom of God, proclaimed by the King Himself. This means, among other things, that allegiance to the King is the primary thing, and obedience to the constitution the outcome of personal loyalty — as D. T. Niles brings out. As Archimandrite Cassian insists from his very different standpoint, "the ethics of Jesus" cannot be isolated from the whole of the Gospel of God.

At the same time, there is no getting away from the ethical demands of this constitution, as Alexander Purdy shows. This is a call to a way of life, which is the Way of the Cross. But it is the call of a King who has gone that way and fulfilled the demands He makes, not only in Himself, but also in our name, as Suzanne de Dietrich reminds us; and who gives us His Spirit, so that His fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets may be attested in our lives.¹ This gift of the Spirit, as John R. Coates says, is the new and transforming fact in the Christian faith.

These two aspects of the Sermon on the Mount constitute its call to the life of faith which, as Kierkegaard says, is exactly the same distance away from despair and from security. If it were a mere ethical code, it would drive us to despair; but since it is Good News, it calls forth our devotion to the King who

¹ A development of the point that He is the fulfiller, and that the fruits which we bear are "signs" that we belong to Him, is to be found in the very stimulating essay of Eduard Thurneysen, *Die Bergpredigt*, "Theologische Existenz Heute", Nr. 46: Christian Kaiser-Verlag, München, 1936.

proclaims it. If it were a way of life by which we could make ourselves perfect, it would lead us to security; but since it is the way which led the King to His death because of human sin, it removes for ever all security in ourselves, and sends us back to Him for forgiveness and renewal. But because He is faithful, the life to which He calls us is one which has a certainty unknown to the world—the unselfconscious trust of the lily and the bird, and the confidence of the man who has built upon the rock.

D. G. M. P.

The City on the Mount

An Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

OTTO RIETHMUELLER

The Speech from the Throne

Where in all the world is there a speech to compare with the Sermon on the Mount for power and influence? Like a magnetic mountain, it has continually attracted towards itself the greatest spirits (not only Christendom!) with undiminished force through all the centuries. For that reason also, it has had to put up with more opposition, distortion, dilution and emasculation than any other writing in the literature of the world.

In reality, what we have here is, to put it shortly and sharply, *a declaration of authority which announces and begins the dawn and breaking-in of a new world.* This whole speech is to be understood only between the two focusing-points of an ellipse, one of which is: "The Kingdom of

heaven is at hand... indeed, the Kingdom of God is among (within) you... It is I " (Matt. iv. 17; Luke xvii. 21), and the other of which is : " The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ " (Rev. xi. 15). To put it in theological language : these words can be understood at all only as Christology and eschatology. " It is the speech from the throne of the King who is entering upon his rule. He says what he will do and what he must ask " (Lütgert).

Matthew V

The Yea of Christ (v. 3-12)

The beginning of the Sermon on the Mount is the opened heavens and the brightest sunshine. The declaration of authority begins with a promise, not with a demand, with a " Blessed ", not with a " Thou shalt "; but it does so in such a way that it calls the whole world in question and announces a new world. The King who speaks here begins with an unheard-of revolution, with a transvaluation of all values. The " Blessed " means his " Yea ". It says to whom *he* comes and holds, whom *he* chooses and loves, for whom *he* cares and is there. In the kingdoms of this world, the poor, the suffering, the hungry is a burden. He is put in the corner, and pushed to the shady side of life. In the kingdoms of this world, the meek are the people least fitted to inherit the earth in these times. And pure hearts have a high value only in festal addresses.

Now, the proper translation is : " Blessed are they that mourn, for *just they* shall be comforted " (and correspondingly in all the verses from 4 to 10). Here the comfort of the resurrection is intended. For philologically the word used here is an interchangeable idea with that of resurrection. " Blessed are the meek, for *just they* shall inherit the earth. " For the earth is the Lord's, and it belongs to those to whom He awards it as a possession. That will be revealed and completed on the earth under the Rule of God, and so especially

on the new earth. This fact, which already stands fast in God's sight on the old earth, is still so hidden, although it is already present in incipient form, that nothing is easier than to make just these sentences look ridiculous. But there again it will prove to be true that he that laughs last, laughs best. To be filled; to receive mercy; to see God; to be called "the sons of God"; to obtain the Kingdom of heaven: all that lies in God's Hand and at His disposal alone. And all that is now promised and shared out, under no other condition than that the gift is taken hold of when it is offered, and that the recipient allows the power of the gift to operate on him and on others.

God's Law remains and is fulfilled (v. 17-48)

The crux of the whole Sermon on the Mount lies in this contrast: Jesus Christ transcends and fulfils the Law at the same time! Everything depends on our facing and not avoiding His Word. Only he can accept the Beatitudes in faith who at the same time bows to the "But I say unto you...". And we can bow to these powerful words only if we believe that with them the new age, the Kingdom of heaven is dawning.

That means *the dawn of the Rule of God: God is now doing a new work, beyond that which has already taken place*. It is indeed vain to suppose that Christ came to do away with the Law and the Prophets, i.e. the Old Testament. For He acknowledges the Law and the Prophets as the Word and Work of God, which endures so long as this heaven and this earth remain. And if anyone break "one of these least commandments" by disparaging it to men in his doctrine, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of heaven. But whoever does *and* teaches them shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven. But because nobody fulfils this, He has come to fulfil.

"Fulfil" here means, not to expound perfectly, but to *do* perfectly. He came to fulfil all righteousness (Matt. iii. 15). The Gospel according to St. Matthew speaks twelve

times of the fulfilment of prophecy. Jesus is the first and only one who wholly does the Will of God and perfectly fulfils the Law. What had been attained previously was the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. But however great the achievements made in that area are, they are too small to guarantee entrance into the City on the Mount, into the Kingdom of God. This righteousness does not make whole the ruined community and poisoned corporate life of men. And for that reason it is incapable of carrying out the reconstruction which now begins. But this reconstruction is anything but a new legislation or a new morality for the kingdoms of this world and for the cities of this earth. Here we have before us *the social order for the City on the Mount, for the new people whom Christ creates and rules, for the City which He builds and orders*. For this City He proclaimed, realized and prescribed a quite different righteousness. But this quite different righteousness is *perfect love, which, on its own accord and in free obedience to the Lord of the new world and the new creation, goes beyond what is regarded as the right and due order in the cities and kingdoms of this world*. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10).

The way in which Jesus Himself fulfilled the words of the Sermon on the Mount shows us that we do not have to do here with clauses of a new law whose application consists in a literal imitation of them, but that we are here given examples of the guidance of the spirit as clear indications of the practical decisions of life. "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." — Jesus fulfilled this word in full majesty during the Passion night when He Himself was struck. Not to let oneself be carried away into wrongdoing by the wrongdoing of the other, but to point out to the other his wrongdoing in the freedom which is no longer obliged to obey the revengefulness of the human heart — that is the fulfilment of this word which is given us by Jesus Himself.

But these laws of life in the true City of peace are always at the same time a judgment upon its citizens. On their own account and in their own strength they always come to grief on these laws of peace; and so they come to live only

from one source, from which their justification and sanctification issues, namely, the forgiveness of their Lord. But this Lord Himself does not rest in His struggles until He has made the City on the Mount into the stronghold of peace from which the Peace of God goes out into the disintegrated world.

Matthew VI

The Veil over Well-doing (vi. 1-4)

Jesus spreads over all well-doing *the veil of secrecy*. Whoever passes his gift from one hand to the other wishes to draw the eyes of men to himself and his gift, and so has at bottom a quite different intention from that of helping. But then one continually hears the objection that it is only another kind of egoism if one looks to one's reward from God. The answer to that is that in fact the Gospel never asks a self-sacrifice from man without answering the question of the meaning and value of such a sacrifice. To lead soldiers into a battle which one already knows to be lost, so that all the sacrifices made in it are lost, does not show a specially high degree of devotion, but is simply a piece of criminal folly. *Whoever stakes his life needs an aim which is worth staking it on; and the certainty and confidence of victory strengthens the readiness to stake it.* In any case, we must not erase from the Gospel the sentence that it is worth while not to crave for thanks and recognition from the world and from men, but to do good and to share, looking towards God — towards *the God* who is a rewarder of good and a revenger of evil. Only so does the *poisonous* root of self-seeking receive a deadly wound, in that the self receives the right which is its due *in the sight of God*.

Concerning Prayer (vi. 5-13).

It is an inviolable law of the City on the Mount, that whoever takes prayer in the secrecy of his chamber seriously is driven and urged by an inner necessity to prayer with the Church. One cannot pray to the Father in secret and deny

the Lord of heaven and earth in public. Only the member of the *Church* has enduring access to the Father in the secrecy of his chamber. But the member of the Church is at the same time the witness and messenger of his Lord in this world. *Private prayer and common prayer always live and die together.*

We ask whether petition is of any use at all, if God knows everything and if God does of Himself that which is good. But this whole question contains a significant part of our distance from God, our lack of knowledge of God and knowledge of self. What kind of child would it be who did not wish to speak to its father any more and did not ask him for anything more because it said : " I know my father is wiser than I, and he must know himself what I need ! " That is in itself the attitude of the stranger and the rebel. The earthly father would be fully justified in drawing the conclusions from such an attitude of his child and denying it even what was needful, because the child must be reminded by this very denial that it has left the position of the child, which is after all *its* position. God as our Father desires that we should ask Him ; and our asking has a place and a power in His Kingdom and in His Plan. The place stays empty and the power unused if we do not pray. And as other words and parables impressively say, this prayer has to take place in all seriousness and with all perseverance. It is not a matter of ceremonies and reverences, but a serious speech of the heart with its God : Thou knowest all things, Thou seest all things, Thou canst do all things. Therefore I tell Thee all things, ask of Thee all things, and commit to Thee all things. There are indeed unanswered prayers, but there are no unheard prayers !

Service of God or Service of Mammon (vi. 19-24)

There is a kind of possessions and wealth which is imperishable and is laid up in heaven. To have one's treasure in God, in His House and patrimony, means to seek for imperishable possessions and to gather imperishable wealth. For the citizens of the City on the Mount, that is in all seriousness

a reality which already exists and acts. God, the Creator of the Infinities, is the infinitely rich one. And if we are children, we are also heirs. Over His Kingdom, over His City, over His House stands the sentence : What is mine is thine. The nature of this world is different, counsels us differently and influences us differently. But the nature of this world passes away, while this wealth remains to all eternity.

It always seems to man the cleverest thing to combine both of these with each other : to be rich in earthly goods and rich in God. But the Church of Jesus is told with the utmost seriousness that just this clever combination does not exist. You *cannot* serve two masters. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." This "and", which man continually tries in every area of faith and life, this division which he tries to make, this religion of "both-and", has once and for all been broken down by Jesus, as something which is impossible for His disciples. There is no half-love here, on the one side or on the other. Neither God nor Mammon is content with a part of our heart. No half-heartedness has any enduring existence here.

The Aim of Life (vi. 25-34)

Kierkegaard says of lily and bird, the "glad teachers of joy" : "Learn then from lily and bird. Throw all your care on God, entirely and absolutely, as the lily and the bird do : so you will become absolutely glad, like the lily and the bird. For that is absolute joy : to worship the omnipotence with which God the Omnipotent bears all your care as lightly as if it were nothing. And this also is absolute joy, the next joy : to dare to believe in worship that ' God cares for you '."

It is a great misunderstanding to see here in any way the praise of laziness, of *dolce far niente*, of sweet idleness, and then to interpret these words as an expression of another blood and another soil. This has nothing to do with the opposites of work or laziness, of exerting oneself or waiting for God's help. Here the question of the aim of human life is put : the question whether man will fill up his life with the

comfortless circuit of working in order to eat and eating in order to work, without any further meaning or aim. Here the question is put whether we see the meaning and the aim of our life in the acquisition of earthly goods and self-preservation, or in the Kingdom of God : whether we seek our security and protection in the goods of this world or in being God's own possession. Because we know of the economy of *God*, the trouble is taken from us of taking tomorrow into today and so doubling the burden of today. The citizens of the City on the Mount have received the infinite benefit of being able to take each day as it comes with its own burden and trouble, because they take it from the Hand of God who cares for them.

Matthew VII

The City of the Open Door and the Narrow Door (vii. 1-23)

The City on the Mount is *both* a city of the open door *and* a city of the narrow door. It is required of the citizens of the City on the Mount that they do not judge ; and at the same time that they distinguish false prophets and separate from them. It is required of them that they show love to all men ; and they are also commanded to protect holy things carefully from men who conduct themselves like dogs and swine towards holy things. The greatest emphasis is laid on the fact that the Kingdom of God has to do not only with words but with deeds, and that God asks, not for words but for deeds ; but beside that there stands the warning that a man may accomplish on this earth the greatest deeds, which are possible only through the intervention of superhuman forces, and do them in the name of Jesus, and yet the Judge at the Last Judgment may turn away : You have done great deeds, but not the Will of God. All confidence in their right to pray and in the power of prayer is strengthened in the disciples ; but at the same time they are shown the man who fills up his life with prayer so that saying " Lord, Lord " is the character-

istic of his life, and who yet remains excluded from the Kingdom of God.

In all that, it must now be said that the last judgment upon any man is withdrawn from us here on earth. *Admission to and exclusion from the City on the Mount belongs, not to its citizens, but only to its Lord.*

It is the City from which the messengers will go out into all the world on their mission to the nations. These messengers will consist solely of people who have been judged and raised up again by Jesus Christ. They have gone through *His* judgment, and live on *His* absolution. They never forget from what source they have their own life. And so their office is the office of edification, but not the office of judgment. This office is to be carried out towards everyone; and thus the City on the Mount is the City of the Open Door.

The City on the Mount is also the City of the Narrow Door.

First of all, the wide door and the broad way is the way of the great mass of men. The narrow door and the narrow way is the way of a small minority. The first purpose of this word is to strengthen the heart of the disciples if they remain confined to a small number. *To be a Christian means to have the courage to be in the minority.* There are two reasons why this courage has to be strengthened in us. On the one hand, it is very hard for our natures to belong to the minority. And on the other hand, the small number is in contradiction with the universal aim of the Kingdom of Christ. Christ is the Lord of all, and His Kingdom is offered to all, and all will be faced with His Judgment. But now it is said of the way of this Kingdom through the world: "Few there be that find it."

Secondly, Jesus describes the way of all the world as the way of death. He saw to the end of the way of His nation and of all nations, and saw at the end of their own way nothing but ruin. The way which the mass of men choose cannot end well. The way by which He leads His own is the way of life. The decisive thing here is that death and life naturally do not take effect only at the end, but, in the light of the Gospel, are already there and acting on us now. What men call life is

death ; and what drives men away from Jesus in their hunger for life drives them away from life.

The Verdict at the Last Judgment (vii. 24-29)

The victory and the catastrophes of which Jesus speaks here are indeed being carried out here and now in this age, but in secret. They are completed and revealed in His Judgment. We are to see clearly how like to one another the foolish and the wise man seem at first to be. Both build a house to protect them. In daylight, no difference can be noticed. Both listen to Jesus. Both agree with Him. But the doing of what is said, the obedience of faith, forms a truly fundamental difference here. In the catastrophes of nature which occur, the thing which decides the fate of the house is the ground on which it stands. ' The speech closes warningly and very vividly : Some day, and certainly and openly upon *My Day*, collapse must come, if you do not take my words so seriously that they have become the foundation of your life, *that you obey them*.

In the Last Judgment, the Eternal Judge will judge according to these words of His, and He will least of all allow the objection and excuse to pass, that these are hard words which cannot be fulfilled. Rather will He show that they are really Gospel, Good News, and that though their fulfilment is indeed impossible with men, all things are possible with God, and that the very nature of the City on the Mount consists in this, that here the strength of God operates in the weakness of men. If the power of God were not here, and did not operate, and did not seek out souls and houses and communities and nations where it can operate, then we should indeed be faced with an unfulfillable law. But because the Lord Himself reveals His Will to us and fulfils it in us and through us through the power of the Spirit, therefore these words are a Gospel which is fulfilled and can be fulfilled.

Righteousness of Men and Righteousness of God

Short Notes on Matthew v. 17-48 ; vi and vii

SUZANNE DE DIETRICH

"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

There is in Jesus a royal freedom ; for He is a King's Son indeed. This freedom confounds those who do not know who He is and do not distinguish the Commandment of God from the tradition of men. Hence the accusation of breaking the Law which the Pharisees formulate against Him ; and hence also, the secret hope of some others that the old Commandment is going to be abolished.

Jesus' words have a solemn meaning : He affirms Himself as the One in whom the Law and the Prophets — that is, all the Scriptures — are going to find their fulfilment.

Thus Jesus sets Himself deliberately at the centre of Revelation. And this single word, like a powerful searchlight, lights up not only the discourse which precedes and follows it, but the two Testaments.

No Word of God could be abolished so long as it had not borne all its fruit of grace and judgment. So Jesus will have power over the Law only by fulfilling it in its last requirements. And far beyond what the Pharisees think : for it is going to bear in Him all its fruit of life and all its fruit of death.

Jesus does not yet say anything of the nature of this fulfilment ; for the hour is not yet come to unveil the meaning of His Life and of His Death ; and the full meaning of His

Words will be revealed to His disciples much later. But already He makes clear that He is in a unique position regarding the whole revelation which has gone before Him, and that it has meaning only in relation to Him.

He is the One who should come; the One whom the prophets have announced; the One whom the Poor of Israel have awaited from century to century: the Righteous One, the Comforter, the Prince of Peace.

Blessed are the poor! Blessed are they that *wail*! For behold, the hour has struck: the Kingdom is at hand.

"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

"I say unto you" . . . "ye shall in no case enter". Jesus speaks as One who holds the keys of the Kingdom and opens and shuts it to whom He will.

The scribes and the Pharisees are men whose whole life is spent in commentating and applying the Law. And Jesus declares all that effort to be vain.

Is that to say that they took it literally, and that He grasped its spirit? Yes. But to say that is not enough.

Jesus is going to show that there are two righteousnesses: righteousness according to men, which is concerned with actions; righteousness according to God, which is the righteousness of the heart.

We can acquire the first. We have to be given the second.

The new Law takes the form of a commandment: "*It hath been said . . . but I say unto you.*" Jesus thus marks the absoluteness of the Divine requirements and His right to formulate them. For it is clear here that He claims to be heard and believed as God Himself.

But in truth this Law bears upon what escapes the command of the will: our desires and our thoughts. Thus Jesus throws us back upon grace, without saying so.

If the Sermon on the Mount were only an ethical code, there would be none more impossible. One does not love by

command. And the very nature of the passions is just that we are unable to master them. Covetousness, desire, hatred arise from depths of our being which are beyond our conscious self.

(Is not original sin just this ?)

So, if Jesus had left us only this discourse as Testament, we should be of all men most miserable. For all that we can read in it is irremediable condemnation. All that we can gain from it is the desperate longing for a perfection which is at once necessary and impossible.

Jesus reduces to nothing all human righteousnesses in order to reveal to us *another* righteousness : *His own*.

For what He commands He also lives.

But still : if He left us only an example, we should remain of all men most miserable. For we should lack the capacity of conforming our life to His.

Thus we must go further and recognize what the Gospel tells us : that He has fulfilled everything, not only in Himself but also in our name ; for He wants us to share *by faith* in His Life, His Death, and His Resurrection.

So everything that He did, He did for us ; and He has power to do it in us, so that the fruits of righteousness which we bear may be signs for the world that we belong to Him. For the righteousness of God works in him that believes works greater than he knows or will ever know ; but they are works of God and no longer human works ; they are fruits of the free gift of God to man in Christ : exactly the opposite of the Pharisaic virtues.

Jesus goes on to illustrate and characterize this " new righteousness " by a series of examples ; it does indeed mean a new covenant : that which the prophet announced and which is written *in the heart*¹. So nothing is done if the heart is not changed.

Jesus judges the least sign of anger with a severity which at first sight may seem excessive. He judges it thus, not only because anger may engender murder, but because it

¹ Jer. xxxi. 33.

already is murder in the depths of our unconscious self. And what it touches and hurts in the other is not the body but the soul.

Jesus says to us that the look of lust is adultery in spirit. And that we must cut right into the living flesh at once in order to save the whole body. And that our eternal life is at stake.

Jesus says to us that our yea is to be yea and our nay nay; that is to say, we should stand with our whole being behind each word we speak.

Jesus does not tell us, as some Utopians would have it, to practise non-resistance to evil and to return good for evil because thus we shall disarm hatred. He promises us nothing of that kind; for He assures us of nothing in this world unless it be of persecutions.

His argument is different : the unique character of the Christian vocation should reveal itself in the unique character of the love which is its very essence. "*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.*"

There is no other rule. The motive of our actions will be just this likeness of spirit the son should have with his father; for it is to sonship that we are called.

And He who speaks thus is the only one who can : the Only Son, the Lord. He who has loved and obeyed unto death; He in whom all was "Yes".

In whom the Yes of adoption has been pronounced;

And who has taken charge of us before His Father to pursue in us His eternal purpose, which is to make us LIKE HIM IN LOVE.

"*Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*"

Jesus does not condemn the three great practices of Judaic piety : alms, prayer, fasting. But He sees them rewarded according to the motive which dictated them.

To him who acts *in order to be seen*, the approbation of men and the silence of God. To him who acts *in secret*, the benediction of God and the silence of men.

Jesus says that all secret and sincere prayer bears its fruit of grace. We must believe this, in simplicity of heart, because Jesus says it, even if nothing should happen and we should rise up as poor as before.

"When thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face . . ."

True love jealously conceals the sacrifices which it freely makes.

Our privations ! Our sacrifices ! What are they before God ? . . . Nothing. And yet, the necessary expression of any real love.

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Your treasure : that to which your secret thoughts always return ; not what you profess to set at the centre of your life, but what really is there ; your attachment, your ambition, your **FIRST DESIRE**.

This desire is the true prayer of our deepest being. And often that prayer denies the prayer which we offer with our lips and reduces it to nothing.

Our idols of flesh and blood. Our ideologies and our systems. Our earthly securities. The secret expectation which we have of a help, of a salvation, which should come from another than from God alone. Idolatries so subtle that we need great honesty — nay more, the grace of the Holy Spirit — to disclose them.

"The light of the body is the eye . . . If . . . the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !"

There is only one light : that of the Spirit of God, witnessing to our spirit that we are children of God¹. There is only one sight : that of faith.

He who has the single sight of faith knows what is of God and what is not ; the discernment of spirits is given to him, and he can call them by their names. But as soon as the Spirit of God is not in us, our sight is dimmed ; so that we no

¹ Rom. viii. 16 ; cf. I John iii. 12.

longer distinguish the Kingdoms and may believe that we are still on God's side when we are already on Mammon's. And everything becomes darkness and confusion.

"No man can serve two masters . . . Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

Mammon : the Demon of Money. Jesus knows his power, for He insists on it more frequently and strongly than we should like. And He makes us aware thereby that we are all less detached from the goods of THIS world than we believe ; and that unawares it is still often the Prince of THIS world who inspires our motives and directs our actions.

To serve is to engage oneself. That demands an undivided heart. For it is upon a battle that we are entering : there is God and there is the Adversary. To be for the one is to be against the other. Not to choose is still to betray.

He who has chosen *attaches himself to his Master* : a thought consoling or terrible according to the master who has taken hold of you.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on . . . Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Therefore . . . It seems that the transition is unexpected. But it has a precise meaning. For Jesus is addressing Himself to those who have chosen Him as Master, and says to them : *If you are mine*, have no more anxiety.

The promise is absolute, and so is the condition.

He who seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is like a soldier engaged in a battle, who has not to enquire concerning the how, the why or the supplies. For his simple part is to obey and to be entirely engaged in his affair, which is to fight loyally. For all the rest, he puts himself in his chief's hands.

Disquietude is always a proof that we are not totally engaged and that we desire some other and more concrete assurance than that which God has given us.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

The warning is grave. For it brings us before that tribunal of God where all that was hid shall be disclosed : where the secret thoughts and the vain words of men shall be revealed. Before that tribunal where only the poor and the merciful will obtain grace.

But we are so hardened and blind that even this warning does not suffice.

"Cast not your pearls before swine."

The expression is rough and the word severe.

To throw pearls to famished beasts is to cheat their hunger and infuriate them.

So the men whose appetites are of the earth will trample under feet the treasures of the Kingdom.

The Word of God has enemies to whom everything will be a pretext for destruction. It is necessary to beware of them and give no opening to their attacks, "lest they turn again, and rend you." And rend not only us, but the work of God itself.

Jesus speaks from experience ; for He has released and is going to release fierce hatreds. Perhaps He desires to let it be understood here why He speaks of the mystery of the Kingdom only in veiled words.

"Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Jesus has shown us in all this discourse what is the life of faith. He has shown us that there is a righteousness of God which alone is worth seeking, a Kingdom which alone is worth possessing. And that all this was beyond our reach ; and that He alone could give it to us.

And behold, now that we are thus driven back, the decisive promise is uttered : "Ask, and it shall be given you."

— Lord, how shall I receive ? for the only effective request is the prayer of faith : that faith which I do not have.

— You must stake everything on My Word. You must commit yourself. I will do the rest. It is in prayer that you will commit yourself. Only so will you know Who I am.

[*"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the Law and the Prophets."*

A criterion so clear and so simple that none can exempt himself from it. And which would by itself revolutionize human relationships if it were duly applied.

For this criterion which Jesus proposes to us remains true, to whatever degree of knowledge we may have attained. He does not tell us here, as He will tell His disciples later on, to love others as He, Jesus, has loved us, which is the only true love. But only to do to others what we would that others would do to us ; taking for point of departure our own desire, which is known to us. When the quality of our desire rises, the quality of our love will rise with it.

"Strait is the gate..."

We have been told that we must come to the Kingdom with our hands full : tense with effort and laden with works.

And behold, we must have them empty. For we pass only naked and stripped, having left all our treasures at the entrance.

Strait and naked is the way of faith ; and few there be that find it.

Broader is the way of virtues and merits ; and many rush along it.

"Beware of false prophets..." For they seem to hold the keys of life ; but their works are of death.

That which is fruit of death and that which is fruit of life will be surely discerned only in the beyond. That is why many will believe that they belong to the Lord and have worked in His name, who in reality do not belong to Him.

So of two works quite alike to our blind eyes, one may be the authentic fruit of obedience, the other not ; the one may find grace in the eyes of God, the other not.

A grave warning which obliges us to reject as condemned all that is not done in the obedience of faith ; and which throws us back entirely on the mercy of God alone.

“ Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”

The doctrine of Jesus is verified only from within : it imposes itself as true upon him who lives it and him only.

That is why the intelligence can make it an object of speculation and the imagination an object of dreams without our becoming more Christian for all that. And the first wave of adversity will suffice to sweep it all away.

He who obeys “ knows ”. A certainty grows in him which nothing can shake.

A test which Jesus puts within the reach of all : a test so simple that few make use of it.

For we must commit ourselves : and no one knows whither he will be led.

Obedient Faith, the foundation of Knowledge : here lies the decisive cleavage by which a revealed religion is separated from all the philosophies of the world. For we are in the presence of a GIVEN EVENT, which we must believe and experience.

Jesus affirms that to build life on His words is to build on a rock of eternity.

It is left to each soul to verify this saying.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine ; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The Beatitudes

JULIUS SCHNIEWIND

The Royal Word of the Son of God

The Sermon on the Mount is "good news of the Kingdom". Jesus is the herald of the coming Rule of God. As the herald proclaims God as the King, the Ruler, the Kingdom of God begins. This proclamation is joy. With all its threatening words of judgment, the Sermon on the Mount is meant as good news. And the herald is Jesus, who comes as the Messiah — as He of whom the expectation of the Baptist spoke, and who was shown to be the Son of God in Baptism and Temptation. So everything in these words which announce the coming Kingdom of God depends on Him who speaks : they are words of *the Messiah of the Word*.

The Sermon on the Mount may not be set in contrast with the other Words of Jesus. This has often been tried. Some speak of a special "Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount"; others make a fundamental distinction between the message of the Sermon on the Mount and the other parts even of the first Gospel. But both these attempts are unjustifiable. Even when one carefully examines the earlier forms of our tradition, one does not come upon a message which is only a noble new religion or ethical system, and which demonstrates its value and its truth quite independently of the Person and Office of Jesus. Rather is the Sermon on the Mount, in all its parts, nothing else than the Royal Word of the Son of God, the Messiah.

The Beatitudes (Matthew v. 3-12)

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit : for their's is the Kingdom of heaven.

4. Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.

5. Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.

6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.

7. Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.

8. Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.

9. Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the children of God.

10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you (falsely), for (my) righteousness' sake.

12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

The Poetical Structure of the Beatitudes

The real chain of the Beatitudes reaches from Verse 3 to Verse 10. That already appears from the fact that the first and the last Beatitude have the same promise : their's is the Kingdom of heaven. Within the series, there is a clear division between Verses 3-6 and Verses 7-10, which form two exactly equal stanzas, with, in Greek, an equal number of words. That witnesses to the solemnity of the whole. A further distinction is that Verses 3-6 have parallels in Luke, while Verses 7-10 are peculiar to Matthew. Still, the Beatitudes in Luke have a similar structure to those in Matthew : Matthew has twice four Beatitudes, Luke four Beatitudes and four Lamentations. And in Matthew the two stanzas are distinct in content : the former speaks of a

waiting, the second of a *being*, of those who are called blessed. The individual sentences are similarly constructed. The first clause in each contains a "blessed", which relates to the present — "blessed are . . ."; this does not mean the eternal blessedness; the Greek and Aramaic expression means a solemn blessing, as in Psalm i: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly". So the Beatitudes solemnly promise to the hearers something that transforms the immediate present for them. But the reason given each time in the following clause always points to the future. All the second clauses have this form: here the thought is always of the coming Judgment and the coming World of God. And the only two sentences which have the present form, Verses 3 and 10, mean something future just thereby. For "their's is the Kingdom of heaven" means that God gives His people a share in His coming World; they will "inherit" the Kingdom of heaven, eternal life (cf. Matt. xxv. 34; I Cor. vi. 9; Gal. v. 21; Mark x. 17; Matt. xix. 29). The exposition will show that the first and second clauses are always firmly connected with each other, that everything that is attributed as something present and promised as something future, forms, despite its multiplicity, a unity which is described in the one word "Kingdom of heaven" which stands at the beginning and end.

The First Stanza (Verses 3-6)

The first Beatitude runs differently in Luke and in Matthew. Luke has a blessing of the poor in general, whereas Matthew blesses "the poor in spirit". Both mean the same thing. The basic word means "poor" in a double sense. It was developed in the time after the Babylonian Captivity. The upper classes in society and the priestly nobility to a great extent fell a prey to the heathen culture of the Hellenistic period. But the religious people who held fast to the old faith in God and to the severity of the Commandments of God belonged almost entirely to the lower classes in society. Thus the words pious, righteous, God-fearing, and poor, small, low, came to be practically equivalent. That is shown

especially in the Psalms. The word "poor" describes an attitude which is both outward and inward. It refers to people whose outward position makes it necessary for them to expect everything from God, and whose inward attitude is such that they really do expect everything from God alone. They must expect everything from God, for (such is the description throughout the Psalms) these godly ones who keep faith with God are persecuted and mocked; they are oppressed and receive injustice; they struggle with death, with deadly sickness, with accusations of sin and with demonic powers. But in all that they are thrown back upon God, and wait for His Judgment, His Salvation, His Help. They are the "quiet in the land" (Ps. xxxv. 20); and this crowd of the "humble" and "lowly", of the poor, existed up till the time of Jesus. They are like the Pharisees in holding strictly to the Law and hoping for God's coming Judgment, but differ from them in lacking *securitas* (security before God), in having a real attitude of waiting and expectancy. It is to this waiting that Jesus speaks the first Beatitude and all the Beatitudes; here already it is clear that the Beatitudes do not bring new knowledge but speak of an *Act* of God; and that those who are addressed are blessed, not for any virtue, but, in a most striking way, for a lack.

The *first* Beatitude describes the inner attitude, the *third* one the external situation. The phrase "poor in spirit" sounds like Is. lvii. 15. The poverty which Jesus means here is poverty before God, poverty in the spirit, i.e., in the inmost heart (as in Verse 8). We usually describe as humility what the first Beatitude praises; only here it becomes plain what is to be understood by humility. It is the poverty before God of which Luther's last words speak: "We are beggars, that is true". It is the lowliness before God of which Is. lvii. 15 and all the prophets and psalms speak, and which continually recurs in the message of Jesus (Luke xvi. 15; xviii. 14).

We translate the *third* Beatitude with the word "meek" or humble. Here again we might translate: poor, small, low. Only here the other side of the situation is pointed out: those are praised who now on earth are oppressed, distressed,

despised. One day they will "inherit the land", says Psalm xxxvii. 11; but in Jesus' day this word is extended to the whole of the earth. Those who now are oppressed and persecuted, despised and abused, will one day be the rulers of the world. This means that one day justice and righteousness will rule on earth (Verse 6), that one day God Himself will rule (Verse 3). The hope of our Beatitude is thus to be rightly estimated only as arising from faith in God and hope in His justice, not as arising from any resentment of the socially oppressed. But it may indeed be asked whether the principle of our Beatitude does not become understandable even outside the Biblical faith in God. The Greeks know no greater offence than "*hybris*", the arrogance that desires to go beyond the limits which are set us human beings. And even with regard to the history of the world it may be asked whether empires endure which rest upon such human *hybris* (Alexander the Great, Napoleon), and whether modesty (*Selbstbescheidung*) — "humility" — does not rather belong to the nature of sovereignty. It is true that our Beatitude speaks of things to come. But it quite definitely means this also as a hope for the earth, not only as a hope for something unseen that stands beyond all earthly realities. The hope of the Bible bears a double face throughout. The hope for a perfection and renewal of the earth is given with the faith in God as the Creator, and with the fact that God's "Word became flesh" (John i. 14): Jesus went over this earth and healed suffering and sickness, appeased hunger and fulfilled the joy of marriage. So Jesus' life is in itself the promise of a new form of this earth. At the same time, however, Jesus' whole life was a way to death and a judgment upon this whole "age" (cf. Mark i. 15; I Cor. ii. 8). So His work came to fulfilment only in the Resurrection, which bears another form than anything which has ever been called earthly; and Jesus' Resurrection is the beginning of a new world, in which earthly orders no longer hold sway (cf. Mark xii. 18 ff.; I Cor. xv. 50).

Between the first Beatitude and the third is inserted *the Beatitude of the mourners*. What has this to do with the first Beatitude? The connection is hidden, but certainly

original because of that : Verses 3 and 4 are an allusion to Is. lxi. 1, 2, which run : "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, . . . to comfort all that mourn." The relation is hidden because various other gifts of the Anointed One are mentioned in Is. lxi. But the word from Deutero-Isaiah begins with the blessing of the meek and ends with the word of consolation. Such Scriptural allusions were understood in those days ; and the particular allusion to Is. lxi. 1 recurs in sayings of Jesus in Matt. xi. 5 and Luke iv. 18, 19. This allusion is a concealed Messianic confession. For the Messiah is the Anointed with the Spirit, the "Messenger of joy", the "Comforter" : these were names given the Messiah by the expectation of those days ; the Messiah thus possesses, in the expectation of the first hearers of Jesus, all the features which are named in Isaiah lxi and alluded to in our text.

The comfort which dawns in the Messianic age includes every kind of suffering and sorrow. This Beatitude may not be narrowed, e.g., to the comfort of the sorrow of sin. Rather is everything included which may be called the power of death ; and it is right to associate this with such words as Ps. cxxvi. 5 ; Rev. vii. 17. Only, the Bible brings the power of death into the immediate neighbourhood of the power of sin and Satan (Rom. v. 12 ff. ; vi. 23 ; I Cor. xv. 56 ; Heb. ii. 14 f.) ; it is our separation from God which gives death its horror and its power. And so Jesus as the Messiah is He who takes the power from death, in His deeds (Mark v. 35 ff. ; Luke vii. 11 ff. ; John xi. 23 ff.) and words (Matt. xi. 5 ; viii. 22 ; Luke xv. 32), through His Death and Resurrection (II Tim. i. 10, etc., etc.).

And now, the connection of Verse 4 with Verse 5 is that the latter leads down from the new heaven to the new earth. The hope of the Kingdom of heaven refers to the beyond (I Cor. xv. 28) ; so does that of the overcoming of death (Luke xx. 35, 36). But Verses 5 and 6 speak of the new earth. Yet this too is close to Is. lxi. Just before the passage already alluded to is Is. lx. 21 : "Thy people also shall be all righteous : they shall inherit the land (or the

earth) for ever ". This saying also shows the close connection between Verses 5 and 6. The renewed earth will be a place of righteousness (II Pet. iii. 13); and all the psalms speak of God's fulfilling at last the hope of the oppressed and poor, and securing justice for them.

For that is how Verse 6, the word concerning *hunger and thirst*, is to be understood. The primary thought here is not that the blessed ones will become righteous, people who exercise righteousness and do righteous deeds. The Sermon on the Mount does indeed refer to this (cf. v. 10, 20; vi. 1, 33). But our text here blesses, not those who *do* righteousness, but those who *hunger and thirst* after righteousness, that is people who desire to receive something. Hunger and thirst have already been used (Is. lv. 1; Ps. xlii. 2; Baruch ii. 18) as images for the desire for God; and so are they also in the N.T. (cf. John iv. 13 ff.; vii. 37; Rev. xxi. 6; xxii. 17). So our Beatitude refers to people who are waiting for a righteousness bestowed by God. The asking and longing for righteousness on earth, the burning desire that injustice and unrighteousness may cease, is called blessed. Where that desire burns, it is an asking for God and His righteousness; and that certainly means an attitude of the whole life, a waiting. The answer to this waiting is the act bestowed by Christ. This Beatitude is no different from the previous three: the fulfilment of this hope is awaited from the Messianic age. The Messiah will bear the name: the Lord our Righteousness (Jer. xxiii. 6; xxxiii. 16); filled with the Spirit of God, He shall judge righteously and procure equity for the meek (Is. xi. 1-4; Psalms of Solomon xvii. 42; xviii. 8).

This concludes the first stanza of the Beatitudes. Those who wait and ask are called blessed, because the fulfilment of their waiting is here promised with authority (vii. 29). It is the fulfilment of the Messianic age, for which all the oppressed wait. And He who promises this fulfilment gives Himself to be known as Messiah to those who have ears to hear: He is the messenger of joy to the poor, the comforter, the King of righteousness. But all that is said only in a veiled way. The Christian Church of the early time, which prayed from the

psalms and prophets, knew what is being said here, and also knew of the Names for Christ : Messenger of peace (Ac. x. 36 ; Eph. ii. 17), Comforter (John xiv. 16), Righteousness of God (I Cor. i. 30 ; Rom. x. 3, 4 ; II Cor. v. 21) ; it knew that all these Beatitudes hold good as coming from Jesus as the Christ. But at the same time it announces Him in such a way that He, Jesus Himself, is the Poor One, the Lowly One before God and men (Matt. xi. 29 ; xxi. 5), who is without consolation, derelict of God (Matt. xxvii. 46), over whom all injustice passes (Matt. xxvi. 59 ff. ; xxvii. 38 ff.). These Beatitudes are thus words of the Messiah, but they are veiled because this Messiah Himself is veiled, unkingly in form, poor before God and men. Even apart from this relation to Jesus' Person and Work, our Beatitudes do not allow of the widespread interpretation which speaks as though they listed a series of special virtues. Mourning can be conceived as a virtue only if it is understood as penance — the very opposite of what the call to repentance in iii. 2 ; iv. 17 really means ; to say nothing of the fact that mourning and comfort had to be understood in the widest sense. The same is true of the first and third and fourth Beatitudes : the first and third are turned into a virtue of humility, the fourth into the virtue of the strenuous endeavourer : the exact opposite of what is really said. The Beatitudes mean in reality a waiting upon God, to which the promise is given by God's intervening. But God's intervention is *Jesus*. If the Beatitudes have been turned into a catalogue of human virtues, that is because Christian preaching had to a large extent forgotten the last question concerning God. These very "Christian virtues" have often developed a twisted and powerless Christianity which lacked joyful and effective action.

The Second Stanza (Verses 7-10)

The second stanza of the Beatitudes complements the first by setting beside the waiting a way of conduct, beside the lacking a way of being. But here also what is spoken of is not virtues to whose exercise men are challenged, but rather a way of conduct which grows out of God's action. Here

again, the second half of all the sentences always means the last Judgment and the new world of God; the first half mentions each time a way of being and acting in which something of God's coming world already becomes visible in this world.

The Judgment of God is intended in the *fifth Beatitude* with the words : obtain mercy. Before the Judgment of God the Majestic and Holy, nothing holds but His mercy; no man can raise a claim before Him. That already runs through the whole O.T.; it was not yet forgotten at the time of Jesus, although Pharisaic Judaism had worked out the idea of merit. The word of Jesus sets what the Last Judgment brings in immediate relation to present conduct. Its meaning appears at once, and was also familiar to the contemporaries of Jesus : he who does not exercise mercy finds no mercy with God (James ii. 13). The Lord's Prayer takes up this thought again (vi. 12, 14 f.); how can he who has not forgiven ask for God's forgiveness? But these sentences do not mean in Jesus' mouth that the merciful, forgiving man earns by his conduct a merit, a claim to God's mercy and forgiveness. The parable of the wicked servant, Matt. xviii. 21 ff. shows incontestably the contrary : before God our guilt is infinite, and that guilt is taken from us; our forgiveness would thus be only the consequence which would follow as a matter of course from that which we had received. The same is said in Luke vi. 36 : to be merciful, as our Father is merciful. To be merciful is *God's* character, — and *therefore* it is true that he who exercises mercy is blessed : he bears something of God's character; for to be merciful does not arise from us men, who are disinclined to exercise love (vii. 11), but happens despite ourselves, over our heads as it were. And it is so that the "works of mercy" are described (Matt. xxv. 34 ff.); those who have done them do not themselves know of their good work. It is thus said to him who is constrained and compelled to show mercy that this comes, not from himself, but from God and His coming world. The same is true of the three following sayings.

The Beatitude concerning *purity of heart* certainly refers to chastity (cf. v. 28), but not only to that. Pure means the

same as clear : " simple ", not divided (vi. 22 ; Rom. xii. 8) ; clear, not troubled (II Cor. i. 12 ; Phil. i. 10 ; ii. 15). So the Beatitude is related to the whole of life ; and we may think, as of chastity, so also of purity in the attitude to money (vi. 22), and of truth and simplicity of speech (v. 37 ; Eph. iv. 29). The word " a pure heart " already contains all that in the O.T. (Ps. xxiv. 4 ; li. 12 ; lxxiii. 1). And this inner purity already stands in contrast to the external ritual purity in the O.T. When this contrast is taken up in the N.T. (e.g. Rom. ii. 28 f. ; Act xv. 9 ; Tit. i. 15) and in the words of Jesus (Matt. xxiii. 25 ; Mark vii. 15, 21 ff.), it takes on an inescapable keenness : the inward man, the heart is evil, and no external cleanliness can help here (xxiii. 25), nor can any ritual cleansing make the evil heart good. Here again, as in the foregoing Beatitude, something is meant which is wonderfully granted to man : not to be able to bear impurity, " to be of the truth " (John iii. 21 ; xviii. 37). Our Beatitude, like all the previous ones, speaks of God's coming Judgment and God's coming world. It is promised to those who are removed from the nature of the human heart (Mark vii. 21 ff.).

The gift of the coming world is described as *sonship of God*. This means the solemn investiture with the dignity of a son of God. This happens at the Last Judgment, and sonship of God is a gift of the coming world (Wisdom of Solomon v. 5 ; Luke vi. 35 ; xx. 36 ; Rom. viii. 23 ; Rev. xxi. 7). It is indeed the highest conceivable name of honour.

The idea of sonship of God was already known in the environment of Jesus. So it is not the case (as is often represented) that Jesus first coined the " idea of sonship of God ". Rather does He assume (as in Verses 16, 45, 48) that His hearers understand it when He speaks of God as the Father of the individual, and says of every individual man that he must and can show his sonship of God. But the new thing in this message is already shown in our Beatitude. Sonship of God, the highest of all honours, will be attributed unmistakably by God to His own only at the Last Judgment. To whom will this honour be attributed ? Jesus blesses the *peacemakers*. The word does not mean only the " peaceable ", who patiently *keep* the peace ; rather does our word speak of

those who *make* peace. Whoever *makes* peace between man and man bears God's character. For God is the God of peace (Rom. xv. 33 ; xvi. 20, etc.), and God makes peace between Himself and men, between Himself and His enemies. That is expressed in the N.T. by the word "reconciliation" (Rom. v. 11 ; II Cor. v. 18 ff.). Similar things were said before Jesus came ; only what was thought of was a reconciliation from case to case, the reconciliation at the great Day of Reconciliation ; the N.T. as against this never tires of saying that God has made peace once for all through Christ (Eph. ii. 14 f. ; Rom. v. 1 ff. ; Acts x. 36). But just this is presumed in our Beatitude. Like all the Beatitudes, it promises something future to the hearers already now, with absolute certainty. Who has authority to speak thus ? Only the Messiah, the coming Judge of the world Himself. But in our Beatitude, as in the first two, the Messianic note is especially clear. The text Isaiah lii. 7 speaks of the messenger of good tidings, who comes over the mountains : he announces good tidings, he announces peace, and calls out that God is now entering upon His Rule. This passage was at the time of Jesus applied to the Messiah. When the Messiah comes, " his first word will be peace". He sets up the peace of God, announces that God is now the Ruler, and so peace and salvation come on earth.

All the Beatitudes have a Messianic meaning. This becomes obvious in the last one, *the Beatitude of the persecuted*. Since Isaiah liii. it was expected that the Messiah must suffer. It was known that the " righteous " must suffer (cf. Ps. xxxiv. 20 and all the words concerning the " enemies "). This expectation is very closely connected with what was said about the first Beatitude. If the poor wait for the Kingdom of God, His comfort and His righteousness, that means that they are continually being persecuted, and that just because they are righteous. But the Messiah will fare no better than all the righteous ; and a final and most difficult time of suffering will precede the days of the Messiah (cf. Mark viii. 34 ff. ; xiii. 9 ff.). But just then God's Kingdom comes ; so our Beatitude harmonizes with the first, as in the hope, so in the attitude of the blessed ones.

But *everything said about all the Beatitudes forms a great unity*. The attitude of those who are blessed is always the same : it is the waiting upon God of which the first Beatitude speaks, in new and different forms. This is true of both stanzas ; the attitude described in the second is also a waiting upon God. Men are addressed with the assurance that their doing and being come from God : the mercifulness and purity, peacemaking and suffering for righteousness' sake. The exhortation and the promise always correspond : because God is the Merciful, the Pure One, the Peacemaker, the Judge of all evil — therefore His eternal salvation is given to those in whom God's action and nature are already expressed.

Persecution and Rejoicing (Verses 11 and 12)

Verses 11 and 12 are a doublet of Verse 10. It is the same Beatitude, but in the second person plural : the disciples are directly addressed.

Some texts leave out the word "falsely" here, and substitute "for righteousness' sake" for our A.V. "for My sake". Elsewhere also (as in Mark x. 29) the expressions "for My sake", "for the Gospel's sake", "for the Kingdom of God's sake" are used interchangeably ; and it is in that sense that righteousness is spoken of here. The new righteousness (cf. v. 20) and the Kingdom of God (cf. xii. 28) have appeared with Jesus. And it is certain that the hatred which persecuted the first Christians was directed against their Lord, against Jesus the Crucified.

The promise too is broader here. To be persecuted for righteousness' sake is exceeding joy — a joy which already has in it something of the nature of the eternal joy of heaven. This joy knows of an eternal "reward". It is worth while to suffer for God's sake, it is not in vain or worthless ; and God knows what His own suffer, and keeps their reward in heaven. The thought of reward may seem strange to us. But all that has gone before shows us that what is waiting in heaven, in God's other world, for Jesus' disciples, is nothing deserved or earned or obtained by them. The gifts of the coming world, as all the Beatitudes say, are given free and for nothing to

those who bring no claim and no merit. And yet the idea of reward remains in Jesus' words : God of course does not allow Himself to be served in vain. But reward and retribution are God's gift of grace ; it is a " reward of grace " (Rom. iv. 4).

There is a further word of comfort to the persecuted : to be persecuted is a prophet's fate. Now Jesus' disciples are set alongside the prophets, the men of God, filled with the Spirit, through whom God does His deeds and by whom He speaks. The community of disciples knows that in it the hopes of Joel iii ; Jer. xxxi. 33 f. ; Is. liv. 13 are fulfilled : even the least among the Christians is like a prophet, led and taught by the Spirit of God. This is an attitude which was felt in the O.T. and Judaism only as a final hope which vanished more and more ; but the N.T. knows of its fulfilment, through Jesus, the Baptist with the Spirit (cf. iii. 11), who as the Exalted One sends the Spirit to His own ; and the Gospels tell that the disciples of Jesus, even already during His earthly Life, act and speak like prophets of the O.T. (cf. Matt. vii. 21 ff. ; Luke ix. 54 ff. ; x. 17 ff.).

The Sermon on the Mount as the Way of the Cross

ALEXANDER C. PURDY

The ethic of Jesus is " strange and disturbing to us ", wrote Eduard von Hartmann ; and so it has ever been, alien and revolutionary. The sayings in the Sermon on the Mount prohibiting oaths, anger and lust ; commanding love to enemies, turning the left cheek to him who smites the right, giving one's cloak to him who steals one's coat, replacing all anxiety by simple trust in God — all these and like sayings we find frankly impossible in the ordering of normal life. Yet they continue to exercise a strange authority. They are alien, yet native to us ; revolutionary, yet the very consti-

tution of a kingdom to which we owe allegiance. One recalls the description of Christians in the Epistle to Diognetus : " They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners. They bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign. Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven ". It is because the Sermon on the Mount witnesses through the imperfect medium of language and within the limits of time to this kingdom of ends and evokes a response in Everyman that we have not found it possible to dismiss these strange and disturbing words as sheer nonsense.

The Authenticity of the Sermon on the Mount

Critical intelligence has played upon these sayings in the legitimate endeavor to explain, to rationalize, and to integrate them in an ordered view. Many questions arise. Have we here the very words of Jesus ? We are learning that the Gospels are primary sources for the primitive Christian community and only secondary sources for the life and teaching of Jesus. But granting that the form, the color and often the very words are due to the early Christian community, it yet remains the simplest solution, historically speaking, to credit the substance and spirit of the teaching to the impact of a creative person upon those who shaped the tradition. The revision or even the creation of sayings is most apparent where the severity of tone is modified or contradicted. It is difficult to see why tradition should have invented the hardest sayings. It is just the most disturbing words, e.g. about loving the enemy, which emerge intact from the critic's scrutiny. Moreover, the problem of historicity in its modern phrasing seems not to have existed for the first Christians, at least until they faced the threat of evaporating their faith into a system of ideas. " No early Christian would admit that a saying attributed to Jesus but received ' through the Spirit ' had any less claim to historical truth and to full authenticity than a saying reported as uttered in Capernaum or Jerusalem during his earthly

ministry." (F. C. Grant, "The Spiritual Christ", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. LIV, Part I, March 1935, p. 14.)

Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus

Since Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, the major explanation of the lofty and severe ethic of Jesus is eschatological. If Jesus believed in the imminent break-up of the present world order and the consequent liquidation of humanity and its institutions, does this not account for the character of his sayings? May we not regard the ethic as intended for the interim between Jesus' own day and the End, and as not applicable to a continuing society under earthly conditions? And does it not follow that those who cannot share Jesus' historical perspective are absolved from the authority of his ethic?

The present writer is convinced that Jesus' teaching was eschatologically conditioned. All the sources we possess for the primitive period — the writings of Paul, Mark's Gospel and the Acts — are strongly eschatological. To find in Jesus the exponent of sociological change is to be almost completely skeptical of our sources. Jesus proclaimed an End-Event, an *Eschaton*, an Act of God who was about to terminate human history with awful yet loving finality. Unless we are able to recover something of the tidal emotional surge which this proclamation aroused we shall fail to understand the ethic.

A frank recognition of the role of eschatology in the teaching of Jesus throws light upon his ethic. Jesus is not represented as teaching any organized system of ethics. Many questions, e.g. suicide, abortion, the relation of the individual to the state, are either ignored or evaded. What we have is an *ethos* rather than an *ethic*; and the scant use made of the Sermon on the Mount in other New Testament writings may be explained in part by the fact that the church found relatively little in the Sermon to serve its need for specific ethical instruction. Jesus spoke "as one having authority, and not as the scribes"; reason and prudence play almost no role in his teaching; there is no metaphysical conception

of good or evil or of the nature of man ; rewards and punishments are announced after the prophetic manner and without labored rationalization. "For Jesus morality does not exist strictly speaking, apart from religion ; it is merely an aspect of religion, or, to put it another way, it results from the contact of religion with daily life and human conduct." (Guignebert, *Jesus*, p. 372.) All this is the direct result of the all-absorbing and utter conviction that the Rule of God is the sole Reality and that this Rule is imminent.

But eschatology does not explain everything ; it only ensures that the ethic shall correspond to the nature of the *Eschaton*, deriving its authority from the absolute character of that event. In Jesus' teaching the ethic is explicitly related to the character and the will of God. His will, revealed in the past, now becomes a tremendous imperative. The Gospels are electric with the divine energy already breaking in upon human life. Jesus' words are quick with this divine vitality. His deeds are revelatory of that sovereign power. But what is the nature of God's will ? Is the God of Jesus just the God of Judaism whose will for men is now obviously imperative because of the imminence of the end ? So many scholars conclude. The Jewish scholars are apt to be more discerning at this point. Dr. Joseph Klausner writes : "Jesus tells his disciples that they must love their enemies as well as their friends, since their 'Father in heaven makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends his rain upon the righteous and upon the ungodly'". Klausner concludes that for Jesus "God is not *absolute righteousness* but *the good* before whom is no evil. He is not the God of justice, in spite of his Day of Judgment : in other words, *he is not the God of History* . . . and such an idea of God Judaism could by no means accept." (*Jesus of Nazareth*, pages 379, 380. Italics are Klausner's.) We shall consider later the inference Klausner draws. It is sufficient at this point to remark that he has rightly discerned that the issue lies deeper than eschatology. What finally matters is the nature of the Life and Power that is sovereign, and not the historical perspective conditioning its exercise.

To characterize Jesus' teaching as "interim-ethic" is a half-truth only. Certainly Jesus does not regard evil, suffering and sin as permanent. In this sense his teaching is for an "interim". But there is no suggestion of an ethical strategy in his teaching. Paul's treatment of marriage in the 7th Chapter of First Corinthians is an illuminating example of thoroughgoing "interim-ethic". There Paul both commends celibacy and allows marriage because "the fashion of this world passeth away". Jesus' ethic is more properly called "Kingdom-ethic". The stress is not upon prudential or strategic conduct in view of the imminent end, but upon the nature and character of God. God is the Determiner of all right conduct as He is the Determiner of history, human and cosmic; and the latter role merely manifests in unmistakable terms the former. As men live today under the shadow of War, conditioned in all their thinking and acting by its threat, so Jesus lived in the atmosphere of the Rule of God. His meat was to do that Will.

Jesus' ethic, then, cannot be dismissed on the ground of its setting either in Jewish morality or in Jewish apocalyptic. The common man knows this as well as the most erudite scholar. "Love your enemies" is an inescapable contemporary issue which no amount of learned juggling can explain away. Yet, it is urged, we can no more practise the Sermon on the Mount than we can ignore it. "The king will bind thee by such vows as is a shame a man should not be bound by yet the which no man can keep." This is what-ought-to-be-but-is-not.

Is this Teaching mere Idealism ?

Shall we continue to proclaim this ethic as a far-off, divine Ideal toward which humanity moves by little and little? In easier, more optimistic days this seemed possible. We added foot-notes to the Sermon; we explained away the severity as oriental exaggeration; and we documented it with modern illustrations of genial and tolerant human behaviour. Today, this seems hypocrisy and mockery.

Shall we preach the Sermon on the Mount as applicable to quite limited individual relationships ? But Jesus' teaching was not individualistic, it was personal ; dealing with all the relationships of a person. The growing sense of human interrelatedness and individual impotence makes such an interpretation into a kind of parlor morality, an arm-chair ethic capable of appealing only to little, protected, frightened souls.

Does it merely show us our Depravity?

Out of the terrific struggles of modern Europe has emerged a new eschatology, testifying both to the inescapable authority of the Sermon on the Mount and to the despair of tender-minded men. It is proposed that the ethic of Jesus be regarded as a Tutor to bring us to Christ ; showing us our desperate sin and folly ; revealing the utter hopelessness and helplessness of everything human ; increasing the tension between God's Word for man and man's own wisdom, science, culture and art ; creating the crisis to which alone God can speak and be heard and obeyed. As the miracles of Jesus have no meaning in terms of modern science but are " signs " of a transcendent Order standing over against human devisings, so the words of Jesus are meaningless in terms of social, political and economic systems but are " signs " of the transcendent moral order which judges us and all our ways. The ancient eschatology has been allegorized into a moral eschatology by leaving out the cosmic accompaniments and concentrating upon the aspect of Judgment. The Sermon on the Mount cannot be put into practice in human society just because it is human ; to attempt its realization in society is at best, a sentimental illusion and at worst, a denial of God and His will.

This is a powerful word spoken out of the travail of men's souls. The Sermon on the Mount does condemn us, does stand over against us and all our human institutions including the church. But Judgment was not Jesus' great word. His Word was Love, as the Way of Life, as God's Way. Klausner understood this although he rejected it. He felt

that Jesus by proclaiming God as Love denied His Justice and denied also that He is the God of History. This is precisely the issue. Is the acceptance of the Way of Love as applicable to human society a flight from reality, a flight from history ? This seems to be the conclusion alike of the practical materialist and of the crisis theology.

But the utter condemnation of man as man and of society on its human level is surely an utter condemnation of history as a whole. History becomes not only meaningless, except as a tragically expensive lesson in futility ; it becomes positively devilish. A God who would permit men through the long ages to build cultures and civilizations at immense pain and suffering and sacrifice, solely for the purpose of teaching them their complete depravity, stands condemned by the very moral insights He has permitted them to develop. Men have faced this possibility before in the dark periods of their history. Every strong and realistic man has faced it in the facts of his own experience. But this is not a Way of Life. This is not a Gospel. Not the Gospel of Christ.

The Way of the Cross — the Way of Life

The Sermon on the Mount confronts us with the supreme paradox of existence. On the one hand, it condemns us ; for we do not ever live by its teaching. On the other hand, it gives meaning and nobility to human life ; for we know that this is the true meaning of our life. The Cross is the solution of this paradox. " It is at the foot of the Cross that we begin to have some idea that to turn away from the pain and evil in men and things is not the divine way, but only the human way, of dealing with them. In these dark days we sorely need to learn this deeper wisdom of the Cross, and under the leadership of Christ, to find that our normal life cannot be in avoiding pain and difficulty as the natural man does, but in transmuting it into the gold of the kingdom. We must not take our necks from under the yoke of suffering for and with others ; we must not imagine that *our* lives should be made easy and satisfactory to our own limited ideas of what is the best kind of existence : we must learn that the

entrance to that kingdom is ' through many tribulations ' — not grand romantic experiences, but often dull daily exasperations. The great marvel of the life of Jesus is that he did not isolate the sinner by His resentment against the sin and that whilst His standard was one of dazzling purity, He could still be found where evil might have seemed to be paramount : it is thus that He is the Saviour of the world. " (Joan Mary Fry : *The Spiritual Message of the Religious Society of Friends*. Appendix II, p. 27.)

The Way of the Cross is the acceptance of human life as it is and faith in the possibility of its redemption. He who walks this way neither presumes to judge nor claims to be virtuous ; certainly he does not claim to have realized the great words of the Sermon on the Mount. He knows only that the Cross is the way of life for men : first, because identification with others in their need casts out fear ; secondly, because the laying aside of coercion gives no occasion for retaliation ; and finally, because bearing the Cross turns enemies into friends.

The Cross is not a way of thinking, nor a way of emotion ; it is a way of action. No man can truthfully say, I have learned so to discipline my mind as to love my enemies ; nor dare we profess an emotional reaction which can be called love. We can only enter into the sorrow and pain and need of our fellows, sharing it with them and helping them to " transmute it into the gold of the kingdom ". Every value that has emerged in the long history of the race has come this way. Justice is wrought out, not in study or library or around the conference tables of statesmen, but only through the cooperative sharing of the burdens and joys of common life. Sin and folly are never dealt with save at their roots in the soil of human experience. Christ does not stand over against humanity ; He stands within it. He is lifted on His Cross at the point where mercy and judgment meet in every human situation. The Sermon on the Mount is not a code of behaviour to be conned and debated ; it is a way of life to be tested in the interplay of human personalities. This way has been walked in all ages by men of every race and sign and creed. In Christ it has become luminous.

The Sermon on the Mount and The Problem of Evangelism in India

D. T. NILES

The Challenge of the Hindu Attitude to Christ

The problem of Evangelism is essentially the problem of Christian Witness. Indeed the necessity of witness on the part of the evangelist is a fact that is accepted on all hands. The evangelist must be in himself an instance of the power of God in Christ over the human soul. He must be able to testify to a saving knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.

But while this is true and is accepted by all, what is not so plainly seen is that every day and generation makes its own demand as to the special emphasis, in the total Christian experience, which it wants exemplified. At one time the demand is for a testimony of Christ's power over sin, at another time it is for a witness to the Christian "Radiance" in suffering, and at still another time for a demonstration of Christ's constructive ability to guide the affairs of men. So the challenge changes. And as it changes, Christian men and women are called upon to face it, until the challenge itself playing like a light upon their total experience reveals that facet which is being sought.

What then is the specific emphasis which the world today is asking us Christians to exemplify? What is our special task in this generation as witnesses to the power of God to save in Jesus Christ? Our answer here in India and Ceylon must perforce deal primarily with the challenge of the Hindu, and it is that answer which I would attempt to give. *What has the Hindu to say of the Christ today?*

The most striking fact, as I see it, is that many modern Hindus resent being called Non-Christians. They claim that Christ is part of their heritage, also, as men. Many of them consciously use Him and His teaching as the test of ultimate truth and goodness, while all of them study His life and admire His character. And if they still remain Hindus, the significant thing is that so many of them give as their reason for remaining Hindus, the fact that in Hinduism is also found teaching similar to the teachings of Christ. Their attitude is that they have a right to be called Christian if they accept Christ's teachings. Christ demands nothing more; and even if He does, He should not.

Human Ideas or Divine Events ?

The main trends in Hindu thought which produce this attitude may be briefly summarized as follows :

a) To the Hindu, God is primarily an object of devotion and worship. He is not thought of as directly implicated in the historical process. There is a qualitative difference between Time and Eternity; but the difference is metaphysical, not moral.

The result of this is an absence in Hindu thought and practice of what Christians call "Guidance".

b) God is, on the other hand, related to men living in this world through laws and codes which He has ordained and which hold for all men in the same way. But since all men are not alike and circumstances also differ, therefore all are not equally culpable even though they may perform the same acts. Guilt and culpability are matters of motive rather than of action.

The result of this is an absence of the idea that an action, even though prompted by the right motives, may still be culpable simply because that act need not have been done. Human insight was incapable of conceiving a better action, but if Divine insight was available...!! In other words, there is no full recognition of the sinfulness of ignorance: of living in the dark when there is light.

c) Salvation is on the whole a matter of attainment. God's grace is available for man : but it is available simply to help him to do what *he* thinks is right. As for putting him right, the issue is hardly raised.

The result is that the Hindu is mainly concerned with the validity of *ideas* — what is right ! — and his starting point is invariably “ the teaching ” on the one hand and “ himself ” on the other. He does not see that “ the right ” may be determined by *events* in which God is implicated ; and that man's true starting point is not man but God.

And since a man's response and reaction to “ teaching ” will obviously depend on how far he believes in and recognizes God's guidance, God's illumination and God's availability, it is understandable why the Hindu reacts to the teachings of Jesus in just that simple way of acceptance only. What he needs is a demonstration of the necessity and possibility of Christ Himself applying, interpreting and fulfilling His own teaching. He needs to see exemplified the difference between accepting the teachings of Christ as a way of life and admitting His claim to have a personal right and control over life. And it is these needs of the Hindu that constitute the challenge to the Christian in India today.

Acceptance of Teaching or Surrender to a Guide ?

But it is just at this point that many Christians themselves profess to have doubts : for as they say, they can see no such difference, or rather, they feel that the difference exists in words only, in two ways of explaining the same thing. The answer to this, it seems to me, can be very simply stated thus: that he who seeks to guide his life according to the teachings of Jesus is yet *his own guide*, and is therefore fundamentally different from the man who allows *Christ to guide him*. It is a different relationship.

Yes, but what does it amount to in actual practice ? I believe that a study of the Sermon on the Mount itself will give us the answer. Let us see !

Christ: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs...

Me: But what about me ? I want to be poor in spirit, too ; and who will make me ?

Christ: Blessed are the meek...

Me: But how am I to become meek ?

Christ: Blessed are the pure in heart...

Me: But who will cleanse me ?

Christ: You are the salt of the earth...

Me: But I have already lost my savour. I want to be salted.

Christ: You are the light of the world...

Me: But I must be lit !

Christ: Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye...

Me: But I can't see. I am blind. I want somebody to pull out my beam for me.

Christ: Yes, you do. In fact, you by yourself cannot fulfil these things. But I shall fulfil them for you and in you.

Ask, and it shall be given you.

Seek, and ye shall find.

Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

The Sermon on the Mount is thus seen to be a statement of what will happen to a man when he allows Christ to get hold of him, rather than a statement of what a man must do if he is to follow Christ.

All or Nothing

In that crowd, which Jesus was addressing, were some who were anxious to become His disciples. He was a new Rabbi, and it would be fun following Him. And to them He says : — " Are you willing to be meek, to be longsuffering, to be persecuted, to turn the other cheek, to walk the second mile...? For that is what I will make you do if you follow me. I will change you ; and you must make up your mind as to whether you like to be changed."

And there were others in that crowd, who as they listened to His words describing the New-Man, wished with all their hearts that they could be like that. And to them He says — “ You can become like that. I will do it for you. Trust me.”

But besides these two groups, there were also in that crowd men and women who wished to be like “ that ” : but who at the same time were unwilling to let Him do it. — “ He is only a carpenter’s son ! They say that he is not even an orthodox Jew. And besides, if we commit ourselves to him, he will want to change us completely, while it is only a part of his ideal that we accept... In any case, we will follow him, though *on our own* ; and after all *that* is the main thing.”

Is it ? And can we follow Him on our own ? Are we allowed to pick and choose among His teachings ? — That is the problem in Evangelism which Hindu India has set us.

What of Results ?

The Sermon on the Mount raises also another question which is pertinent to this whole inquiry, — and that is the question of practical results. The issue may be stated as follows :

Christ: Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Me: But if it does, can I be sure of my place in the Kingdom ?

Christ: No : for your question itself is a sign of Pharisaic righteousness.

Christ: Whosoever shall smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Me: Will that make him desist ?

Christ: Not necessarily. But your concern is not so much to make him desist, as to be willing not to take offence.

Christ: Lend, not hoping to receive again.

Me: Does that mean that God will help me to get back my own ?

Christ: No. You may not get it back at all.

Christ: Love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you.

Me: Will that change them ?

Christ: Even if it does not, you must continue to love.

Me: What, then, is the point of it all ? I thought you were teaching a surer and a better way, and a spiritual way of safe living, of achieving "results" !

Christ: No. My concern is not what you call "results". Nor should they be your concern. Seek the Kingdom of God (not your place in the Kingdom) and *His* righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.

Me: What things ?

Christ: Whatever is added.

In other words, the Sermon on the Mount is not a new technique for achieving "results", a new method of getting "there". And it is just because it has been adopted by Gandhiji as teaching a new technique that we have our problem in India. And if I mistake not, the same problem exists in the West also. For it is bound to arise in the wake of such a statement as this : "Christ has never been tried" — and that is a statement which I have read in many books by Western authors.

A Programme or a Call for Allegiance ?

Is Christ, then, not concerned with "results" ? And has He no programme for the making of a better, a happier and a juster world ? Has He no plans ?

The story is told of the Duke of Wellington, that just before the battle of Waterloo, he was asked what his plans were. "Plans !" he said, "I have no plans ; my only plan is to lick that fellow." That is about all we know of Christ's plans too. Detailed orders we will receive only

after we recruit. And the primary concern of the Sermon on the Mount is recruitment.

"Never mind plans and programmes", Jesus seems to say, "let us first get related to each other. It is *you* I am concerned with, you bound to Me with a new relationship — the relationship of a man who builds his life upon Me. I don't guarantee results. Indeed, you will not escape the storms or floods of life. But I do say this — your house will not fall. Your relationship with Me will not be destroyed. Nothing will separate Me from you, or you from Me."

What, then, about the floods and storms, and about making a world where they do not happen! Christ refuses to answer that question until His previous challenge to establish the new relationship is accepted. And when it is accepted, our question itself changes, — for now our concern is not so much to prevent the flood, as to demonstrate our new relationship with Him when the flood comes.

Is the world, then, never to be rid of its ills? Yes and No. For though more and more evil will be destroyed as more and more recruits join the ranks, and though more and more changes must take place as more and more houses are built upon the Rock; yet the world will *never* be safe and can never be *made* safe for those who build their houses upon sand.

Thus the problem which we have set ourselves to study resolves itself into this — that the Sermon on the Mount is not a code of conduct given to men to follow, but is a statement of issues which receive their ultimate validity, meaning and relevance only in so far as they are recognized to be issues raised by *Christ*; and that therefore obedience to the Sermon on the Mount and the acceptance of its challenge are never adequate, complete, or correct unless and until we allow Christ to interpret it to us, apply it for us, and fulfil it in us.

He is able

Right at the outset, in discussing the trends of Hindu thought which give rise to the Hindu attitude to "teaching", we stated that the Hindu attitude to the Sermon on the Mount is what it is just because they do not realize either the

necessity or the possibility of God's being available to guide, interpret and fulfil. And now we have come to the conclusion that the only way to *accept* the Sermon on the Mount is to allow Christ to do just these things.

The final question, therefore, is — “Can He?” And what are the *events* in which God in Him is implicated which make us believe that He can? An exhaustive answer would need that we recount the whole Gospel story, for God is implicated in every word and act of Christ. But for our purpose it must be enough to affirm only some of the main facts.

He can, because He is the good Master, who, because He is good, has the right to command men to sell all that they depend on and follow Him. He can, because He is the Christ, the Son of God, in confessing whom alone we lay a true foundation for our lives. He can, because He is the Christ of Calvary, who on the Cross betrothed Himself to man for better or for worse, and whom to accept as Lord alone is joy. He can, because He is Immanuel, the Risen Christ and hence our guide — God with us for ever.

So often, we would rather build our own bridges across to God, trying to follow Christ's teaching and imitate His example, than walk the bridge that He has built. But that is not what He demands. His call is that we accept the service which He came to render. “Let me wash you”, He asks, and unless we let Him, we will lose our part with Him. “Let me guide you”, He pleads, and unless we allow Him, we will lose our way. For with Him and in Him alone, who is both Master and Servant, can we reach the goal of our striving and the haven of our God.

The Sermon on the Mount in the Teaching of the Gospel

ARCHIMANDRITE CASSIAN

Introduction

It has often been said that the roots of contemporary culture, however secularized it may be, can for the most part be traced back to the doctrine of the Church. Our everyday language is stamped with Biblical images. A large part of these images has been taken from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew v-vii). Such are the salt of the earth (v. 13), the light of the world, the city set on an hill (v. 14), the light which is lit to be put, not under a bushel, but on a candlestick (v. 15); or the image with which the Sermon on the Mount concludes: the house built on the rock, or on the sand (vii. 24-27). In Christian society, the lessons issuing from the Sermon on the Mount are very often quoted: it is enough to mention the Beatitudes (v. 3-12), the judgment on the adultery committed in the depths of the heart (v. 27-28), the call to love one's enemies (v. 44 ff.), and especially the Lord's Prayer (vi. 9-13), which is also a part of the Sermon on the Mount. One might say that the very essence of the Teaching of our Lord found its expression in the Sermon on the Mount. Such has been the attitude towards the Sermon on the Mount held by liberal Protestantism, which has the tendency to oppose it to any doctrinal instruction. The aim of this article is to answer the question as to whether this attitude is justified. This article, coming from an Orthodox author, would wish to express the point of view of Orthodoxy; but the place which belongs to the Sermon on the Mount in the whole of the Teaching of Jesus is an objective fact which can be established only by objective means. We can be followed by our Protestant brothers in the path which we shall endeavour to trace.

The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain

The Sermon on the Mount is a systematic exposition of the evangelical morality. It must be observed that the Sermon on the Plain in Luke (vi. 17-42) answers only partially to the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew. A large part of the Sermon on the Mount is to be found in Luke in separate lessons, given in a completely different context, and going on as far as Chapter xvi (cf. Verse 13). On the other hand, the systematic character of Matthew is a fact which cannot be contested. The miracles of Jesus which are grouped in Chapters viii and ix are isolated in Mark and Luke. The same is true of the Parables of the Kingdom (Mt. xiii), the discourse against the Pharisees (xxiii), the eschatological teaching (xxiv-xxv), etc. The formula vii. 28a, which we read at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, is almost literally repeated in xi. 1; xiii. 53; xix. 1; xxvi. 1. It always marks the conclusion of a great discourse whose separate elements are to be found in Mark and Luke, but which constitute a unity only in Matthew. For the Sermon on the Mount there is still more. The introductory formula iv. 23 which precedes the Sermon on the Mount is found again at the end of Chapter ix (Verse 35): Jesus went about all Galilee "teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease . . .". The preaching of the Kingdom and the help given to the sick summarize the Ministry of Jesus. The preaching of the Kingdom — that is the Sermon on the Mount, Chapters v-vii; the help given to the sick — that is the miracles of healing (Chapters viii-ix). Considered as a system, the Sermon on the Mount would be in place at the beginning of the Gospel and would present no historical problem difficult of solution, if we admitted that from the first days of His Ministry Jesus was surrounded by immense crowds which came to Him "from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan" (iv. 25). It may be affirmed with certainty that a long discourse, addressed to the disciples in the presence of a great multitude which His influence attracted, was pronounced in the course of the Galilean Ministry of our Lord,

and that St. Luke conserved its essential elements in his Sermon on the Plain (vi. 17-49). But St. Matthew would seem to have grouped around this kernel some lessons of an incontestable authenticity and importance which were delivered in different conditions. It is very probable that these lessons were conserved in the oral or written tradition before being consigned to our Gospels. If St. Luke wrote his Gospel after St. Matthew, he must have known the *disjecta membra* of the evangelical tradition in their historical surroundings. That knowledge would have allowed him to dissolve the unity of Matthew and present the Ministry of our Lord from a new viewpoint — the chronological order of the facts (cf. i. 3).

It would be erroneous to regard the difference which exists between Matthew and Luke as a contradiction. It shows us the Lord and His Teaching from different standpoints, and for that very reason extends our knowledge of the Incarnate Word, within the limits where that is possible for a finite being. But the difference exists, and depends in many cases on the context in which such and such a Word of Christ has been preserved for us. To know the Teaching of Christ, therefore, it is not enough to study His separate words. It is indispensable to understand them in the context of the Gospel. That is why the Sermon on the Mount must be studied as a unity.

The Theme of the Sermon: the Kingdom of Heaven

The first question which arises is the question of the central idea of the Sermon which gives it that unity. It is astonishing that there is no agreement among the interpreters who seek to bring out this idea. Very often the attempt has been made to deduce it from the Beatitudes (v. 3-12) which form as it were a prelude to the Sermon. Others would believe that the dominant idea of the Sermon on the Mount was given in v. 17-20, and that the Sermon as a whole was meant to show the fulfilling of the Law in the Gospel. But the importance of this or that section does not authorize us to leave out of account the precise indications of the Evan-

gelist, that is to say, of the very author of the Sermon on the Mount, as a *system* of moral teaching. According to the formula iv. 23 and ix. 35, which precedes and concludes the Sermon on the Mount, and which we have already quoted, Jesus was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. The theme of the Sermon is the Kingdom of Heaven. It may also be noted that the introductory formula iv. 23, in indicating the content of the Sermon, refers back to the call which is found at the beginning of the Public Ministry of Jesus and which proclaims the coming of the Kingdom (iv. 17). The theme of the Kingdom continually returns in the teaching of the Sermon. The Kingdom is promised to the poor in spirit (v. 3). That is the first promise which begins the Beatitudes and with them the Sermon. It is given a second time to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (v. 10). But the inheritance of the earth (it is understood : in the transfigured world : 4), the perfect consolation (5), the vision of God (8), the adoption to God (9) — all these can attain their plenitude only in the Kingdom of Heaven. A great reward in heaven is expressly promised to those who are insulted and persecuted for Christ's sake (11, 12). And even the fulfilling of the Law in the Gospel, where some interpreters thought they could find the central idea of the Sermon on the Mount, is envisaged from the viewpoint of the Kingdom of Heaven (19, 20). The notion of the Kingdom returns in the Lord's Prayer (vi. 10). Again, it is the Kingdom and its righteousness which are opposed to the cares of this world (vi. 33). And towards the end of the Sermon : " Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven " (vii. 21).

Love of God and Love of Neighbour

The theme of the Kingdom having once been set, it may be said that the whole Sermon on the Mount is devoted to its development. Let us try to make this clear.

The Beatitudes, which promise to the disciples the Kingdom in its different aspects, indicate the conditions which are

necessary in order to inherit it. The Kingdom is promised to the poor in spirit, to the meek, to the mourners, to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, to the pure in heart, to the merciful, to the peace-makers, to those persecuted for righteousness' sake and, still more, for Christ's sake (v. 3-12). Under the form of blessings, this is an appeal which is addressed to the will of man. It demands an effort on his part. This effort will prostrate him before God and will make him serve men. The two commandments of love — towards God and towards one's neighbour — are intimately bound up with one another (cf. xxii. 34-40). But, here as elsewhere, it is the love of God which has the primacy. Conceived as an appeal addressed to the will, the teaching of the Beatitudes must be defined as a moral teaching. It lays the foundations of the evangelical morality. The disciples of the Lord responding to this qualification will inherit the Kingdom. But there is yet more. The Beatitudes are followed by four verses (13-16) addressed immediately to the disciples. They are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city set on an hill, a candle set on a candlestick and not under a bushel. This concerns the ministry of the disciples, which has as its aim, once again, the glory of the Father in heaven. What are the conditions of this ministry? In the context of the Sermon they cannot be any different from those which have been enumerated in the Beatitudes. In responding to the appeal addressed to his will, the disciple of Christ inherits the Kingdom for himself and brings others with him.

Chapter v. 17-48 forms a section by itself. The fulfilling of the Law in the Gospel, proclaimed 17-20 for the Law as a whole, is applied to certain of its commandments in particular. These are the laws against murder (21-26) and adultery (27-30), concerning the divorce question (31-32), oaths (33-37), the *lex talionis* (38-42), love of one's neighbour (43-48). By commenting upon the different commandments of the Law, Jesus indicates the way in which the Law is fulfilled in the Gospel. He does not leave the ground of the Old Testament; but the criterion of good and evil is no longer formal and external: it must be sought in the depths of conscience. Without entering into details, one cannot fail

to observe that there are no external links which connect this section with the Beatitudes. But the subject is the same : the moral effort which takes effect in the relations of the believer with the Heavenly Father and with his neighbour. The love of one's neighbour which is extended to one's enemies is the way of perfection which has its image in the Father. The Kingdom of Heaven is the goal of our moral effort. One may say more. The contemporaries of Jesus, His disciples and His hearers, had been brought up under the shadow of the Law. The moral conscience of the Israelite found its expression in the formulae of the Law. A moral teaching addressed to the Israelites had to have its point of departure in the commandments of the Law of which the Beatitudes do not yet speak. But the difference of form does not touch the fundamental thing. In a different form, the Beatitudes and the interpretation of the Law deal with the same subject : they lay the foundations of the evangelical morality. In the unity of the Sermon on the Mount, the interpretation of the Law is a development of the Beatitudes.

The theme of Matthew vi is the question of the Kingdom of Heaven in relation to the world. The first section (1-18) is devoted to righteousness, presented, according to the Judaic conception, in the three aspects of alms (2-4), prayer (5-15), and fasting (16-18). The proportion of the three divisions has not been kept, because the teaching on prayer had been complicated by the Lord's Prayer which forms a part of it (9-13, with 14-15 forming a conclusion). But the central idea is the same in the three teachings : the opposition of the effort which is made in the presence of men and for men, and the effort which is made in secret, solely for God. God is opposed to the world. It is always the first commandment which dominates. But, here again, the love of one's neighbour cannot be separated from the love of God, and the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer is a request with a reason : "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (12). The antithesis of Verses 14 and 15 is the development of the reason. In the second section of Chapter vi the subjects of treasure and care are dealt with (19-34). It is cares which accumulate treasures ; and the accumulated treasures over-

whelm us with cares. There is an opposition of principle between Mammon, or riches personified (24), and God. The accent is always theocentric, and the theme — God and the world. But the most probable interpretation of the two verses (22-23) which deal with the eye which is the light of the body, and which at first sight appear not to belong to this context, gives to the adjective *haplous*, "single", the sense of "liberal". The teaching on treasure and its dangers is brusquely interrupted by an appeal to generosity. The possessor of riches is called to make a liberal use of his riches. Once again, the love of one's neighbour and the love of God are intimately connected. Verse 33 gives the summary of the teaching of Chapter vi. in its two sections: "Seek ye first the Kingdom and its righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you". The Kingdom which St. Matthew usually calls the Kingdom of heaven is here simply the Kingdom: it has no attribute in the best manuscripts of the Gospel. In some of them it is called the Kingdom of God. The interpretation is significant. It is God who is the King of the Kingdom. But the Kingdom has its law; and that law is the law of righteousness. In seeking the Kingdom, it is necessary to conform to its law. The law of the Kingdom demands the love of one's neighbour.

Chapter vi. 33 is not only the summary of what goes before it. This verse contains the key which enables us to enter into the last section of the Sermon on the Mount.

Chapter vii has been compared to pearls without a thread. It is precisely a systematic spirit which one was not willing to recognize in the maxims which form the content of this chapter. It would be truer to say that the first impression one has of this section is that the love of God (6, 13-14, cf. 7-11, 15-23) and the love of neighbour (1-5, 12) are taught separately. But that impression is erroneous. The prohibition of judging one's neighbour (1-5) presupposes an objective criterion which will be applied to him who judges. This criterion, being objective, comes from God. And the Golden Rule of Verse 12 is presented as a consequence of, or logical conclusion from, Verses 7-11, which are an exhortation to prayer. Prayer rises to God. The Golden Rule summarizes

the law of God. The love of neighbour is founded in the love of God, and the love of God keeps its primacy. There are cases where the love of God constrains us to make a judgment of our neighbour. In order not to give that which is holy unto the dogs and not to cast pearls before swine (6), we must know who are the dogs, and who are the swine. The same is true of the false prophets (15). The distinction involves a judgment. The judgment of our neighbour forbidden by the commandment to love one's neighbour may be demanded by the love of God.

We can now summarize. The Sermon on the Mount forms a perfect unity dominated by the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is the goal of our effort. The effort is inspired by the love of God which is inseparable from the love of neighbour. The Sermon on the Mount speaks of the love of God and the love of neighbour in view of the Kingdom of Heaven. Addressed to the will of the disciple, it has a very marked practical note, and does not dwell upon dogmatic teaching.

The Place of the Sermon on the Mount in Orthodoxy

We have already quoted the opinion, especially widespread in liberal Protestantism, that the very essence of the teaching of our Lord had found its expression in the Sermon on the Mount. It must be admitted that the importance of the Sermon on the Mount cannot be exaggerated. It is recognized without any reserve in the Orthodox Church, which expresses its attitude towards the Sermon on the Mount in a symbolic manner. During the Liturgy, a procession takes place which is called the "Little Entry". The clergy come out from the sanctuary by one of the lateral doors, carrying the Gospels, and return to the altar by the Royal Door. The Little Entry symbolizes the preaching of the Gospel in the Ministry of our Lord. It must be noted that among the canticles which accompany the procession the most frequently used are the Beatitudes. This choice is very significant. The Beatitudes, forming an introduction to the Sermon on the

Mount, are held to present a summary of the preaching of the Gospel.

It must be said that the moral aspect is one of the aspects of Orthodoxy which it would be wrong to ignore. Tolstoi, the great Russian novelist who in his old age believed himself called to preach the Gospel, too often disfigured the teaching of Jesus in his struggle against the Church. His moral views as well as his dogmatic views have been widely contested. It is enough to recall his doctrine of non-resistance, which he thought he could support by the Sermon on the Mount. But here was one thing which the great artist saw very well. He showed in his popular tales that the moral ideal of the Russian peasant who was faithful to Orthodoxy was inspired by the Gospel. The observations of Tolstoi are not isolated in Russian literature. It is enough to mention Leskov. It is permissible to believe that the Russian soul will keep the imperishable imprint of the evangelical morality even after the great upheavals of the Revolution. The evangelical morality is the Sermon on the Mount and Matthew generally.

St. Matthew does not only give a systematic exposition of the teaching of our Lord. He has a quite special interest in religious *morality*. Now, the Gospel lessons which are set before the faithful during the offices are most often drawn from Matthew. That is due to the teaching on the Church which is given in Matthew (cf. xvi, xviii), but also, and probably even more, to the moralism of that Gospel. Matthew is the Gospel which can guide the believer in everyday life better than any other. If these conclusions are justified, the importance which the Church attributes to Matthew extends in the first place to the Sermon on the Mount.

Among the commentators on Scripture, the Orthodox Church has a quite special veneration for St. John Chrysostom. His Homilies have been read, compiled and translated for centuries. They remain a source of edification up to our own day. Chrysostom was above all things a preacher of morality. The mystical depths of the Fourth Gospel touched him less than the practical teaching of Matthew. It is through the exegesis of the great moralist that Matthew — and in Matthew

the Sermon on the Mount — has left its impress upon the spirit of Orthodoxy.

The Relation of Moral Teaching and Dogmatic Teaching

But the great importance which the Orthodox Church allows to the Sermon on the Mount does not permit us to reduce all the teaching of Christ to the system of morality which it gives. As in the Epistles of St. Paul the exposition of the precepts of morality was for the most part preceded by the dogmatic teaching which served as its basis, — so in the life of the Church, moral effort cannot be separated from contemplation. If Matthew may be called the Gospel of the Church, which has it read during the offices more often than the other Gospels, it should be interesting to note that during the fifty days which begin at Easter and end at Whitsuntide, the Gospel lessons are taken from John. The Scripture lessons are always adapted to the needs and capacities of the hearers. John is more difficult to understand than Matthew. It is evident that the Church, in choosing John for the period between Easter and Whitsuntide, believed that period to be more favourable for making it understood to the faithful. Now, that period, illuminated by the glory of the Resurrection and crowned by the descent of the Spirit, is the most solemn period of the whole of the Church's Year. It is a period of joy and grace. The opinion of the Church is that the depths of the Spiritual Gospel are opened to the faithful in the abundance of grace. The Prologue to the Gospel, speaking of the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God Himself, is read during the Liturgy of the "Shining Night" of Easter. The use of John vindicates the importance of dogmatic teaching in the mind of the Church.

But the dogmatic teaching of the Gospels cannot be limited to John. It has often been said that the verse Matthew xi. 27, Luke x. 22, would be in place in John. It is not astonishing that the authenticity of this verse had been called in question by liberal criticism. However, its exclusion could not be justified. No manuscript exists in which this

verse is omitted ; and — what is even more important — the theological thesis which it contains is in perfect accord with the Synoptic teaching.

We have tried to show that the theme of the Sermon on the Mount is the theme of the Kingdom of Heaven. But the theme of the Kingdom can be approached in different ways. The dogmatic teaching of John on eternal life (cf. the whole Gospel from iii. 15 onwards) is nothing else than the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is proved by the Synoptic usage that these two terms are synonymous (cf. Mark x. 17 and 23-25). In the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, the term " Kingdom of God " is used twice (iii. 3, 5), and appears no more. It is replaced at once by its synonym " eternal life ". The doctrine of the Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount has a practical aspect. It is addressed to the will ; it does not wish to show us the Kingdom in its essence. There exists a parallelism, sometimes vague, sometimes quite marked, between the episodes of Chapters viii-ix (which are for the most part miraculous) and the Sermon on the Mount. The episode of the leper whom the Lord sends to the priest (viii. 1-4) makes us think of the Law which Jesus does not desire to destroy (v. 17). The praise of the centurion (viii. 10-13) reveals the extension of the Law beyond the ethnic limits of Israel. It is the fulfilment of the Law in the Gospel. This parallelism, which may be carried still further, allows us to understand Chapters viii and ix as an illustration of the Sermon on the Mount. We still remain in the moral realm. The instruction of the Twelve who go out to preach the Kingdom (Chapter x) has nothing to do with the essence of the Kingdom either. It is the appeal of the Sermon on the Mount which the Lord puts in the mouth of the apostles. A new section begins with Chapter xi. The message of John (xi. 2-6) and the witness which Jesus bears concerning John (7-19) set the problem of the Kingdom and at the same time the problem of the Messiah. Bound up with the problem of the Messiah, the problem of the Kingdom is given in a new light. The Synoptic material which is grouped in Chapters xi-xiv makes us penetrate into the mystery of the Messiah, who is the Son of God (xi. 27), and shows us, in the parables of

Chapter xiii, the essence of the Kingdom. The teaching of the parables, eschatological and ecclesiological as it is, presents the Kingdom to us as a reality from another world (33), whose future coming will put an end to the present order of things (39-43, 49-50), but which is anticipated from now on in the grain of mustard seed which is already sown, in the leaven which is already mixed in the meal (31-33). The anticipation of the Kingdom is real in the Church. We have passed from the practical teaching into the domain of dogma. In the harmony of the system, an illustration of dogma is given in the great miracles of Chapter xiv : the multiplication of the loaves, the walking on the sea (14-33), which make us feel in advance a new world.

We may now return on our tracks. Does the practical aspect which the doctrine of the Kingdom takes on in the Sermon on the Mount exclude any allusion to the dogma of Chapters v-x ? The examination of the Johannine theology and of the system of Matthew as a whole throws a new light on the Sermon on the Mount. Does not the theocentric attitude which characterizes the Sermon on the Mount proclaim the dogma of the Father ; and at the same time does it make us forget Jesus, the New Law-giver who is come to fulfil the Law (v. 17), who comments upon it (21 ff.), who knows that His disciples are going to suffer for Him (v. 11-12), who can open and close the gates of the Kingdom (vii. 21-27) ? He is the Son who is one with the Father. The Sermon on the Mount shows us that unity as a unity of action. The reply of the centurion which St. Matthew has preserved (viii. 8-9) lets us perceive that the Evangelist understood it as a unity of life. The centurion prays Jesus to "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me : and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." It was just these words which provoked the astonishment of Jesus and the eulogy which he made of the faith of the centurion. What was the object of his faith ? Did he not believe that Jesus had the power to cure because He did the Will of His Father, He and His Father being one ? If this con-

clusion is justified, it is once more the Johannine dogma (cf. John x. 30 and all Chapter v) in Matthew. And now, in conclusion, one last point. The moral teaching of the Sermon on the Mount traces the way of human effort which leads towards the Kingdom. The effort belongs to this world, but not the fulfilment, which belongs to the future world. The way of effort is the way of the Church which leads to the eschatological plenitude. We are accustomed to comment upon the Beatitudes as being commandments. In the context of the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, this commentary is justified. Conceived as promises, the Beatitudes make us think of eschatology. And the mystery of the Church also belongs to the domain of dogma.

These considerations are not a restriction of the conception of the Sermon on the Mount which has been proposed in our article. In its broad outlines, the Sermon on the Mount will always remain a system of morals. But we thought it important to show that in the unity of the Gospel the moral teaching, even in the system of the Sermon on the Mount, cannot be separated from the dogmatic teaching, and that the maxims of practical conduct are deeply rooted in the dogmas of faith.

The Sermon on the Mount and the Old Testament

JOHN R. COATES

Jesus speaks as a Jew to Jews

The Greek language of the Gospels is apt to obscure their Hebrew mentality, as a garment may disfigure the body which it clothes. Thus the inner reality of the Sermon on the Mount is akin to the genius of Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and is not fully revealed to the disciples of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. When Mark was enlarged into Matthew by the addition of words of Jesus, these were arranged in five blocks,

as if to suggest that in them we have a new Pentateuch. It cannot be claimed that these blocks correspond respectively to the books of the Law ; but it is important to see that what they set forth is vitally continuous with Mosaic religion. Jesus does not move in the opposite direction to Moses, but goes further in the same direction. If we would understand His teaching in the sense in which He meant it, we must relate it to the world in which His thought lived. It may be impossible for the scientific historian to be sure that Jesus quoted any particular words from the Old Testament on any particular occasion, but that He did so quote is as certain as that He died under Pontius Pilate. Christian writers from the first, whether addressing Jews or Gentiles, have sought to commend their religion by shewing that it means the realization of Old Testament ideas and ideals. It is impossible not to believe that this characteristic goes back to Jesus Himself. Quotations are not adduced merely in corroboration of statements based on other foundations ; they are vital and indispensable ; without them the argument of the New Testament would break down.

It is not an academic matter, of interest only to Jewish rabbis, when we read that Jesus answered an inquirer by saying that the first commandment is *to love God*, and the second *to love thy neighbour*, quoting in each case from the Mosaic Law. His own historic significance is involved in the fact that He did thus quote. It is noteworthy that the most Greek of the four Gospels records the words, " Salvation is from the Jews ".

The evidence seems to shew that Jesus was familiar with all three parts of the Jewish canon, — the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, — and that words from them expressed for Him the will of God at the great crises of His life, from the Baptism to the Crucifixion.

Considerations such as these justify us in paying special attention to the well-known saying, " Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets : I came not to destroy, but to fulfil ". This throws light on the mind of Christ, and shews the true way in which to interpret His teaching. It means that in order to understand the Sermon on the Mount, it is

necessary to have some acquaintance with "the law and the prophets". What is it that our Lord claims to fulfil? And what does He mean by fulfilling? These are the two questions which we must answer if we wish to receive from His teaching what He intends to give.

The Law and the Prophets

This phrase stands for the whole of the Old Testament. The five "Books of Moses" are regarded as primary and fundamental, the rest being intended for illustration, explanation and enforcement. A general survey of this literature shews at once that we have not to do with a reasoned presentation of theories. Here are no abstractions. This is a story of human experience, with God in it. Rich as it is in dogmatic assertions of ultimate truth, these are always historically conditioned. Indeed it would be more accurate to speak here of assertions of reality than of truth. The history is of a People, and the assertions are made through vividly characterized individuals. The principal subjects thus treated are God and Duty. From beginning to end, both are presented in such a way as to constitute good news. That is to say, the motive behind this whole body of literature is salvation. What is offered is a challenge to adopt a way of living with people in this world; and this is shewn to be dependent upon an inner attitude to God. The result of accepting this challenge and adopting this attitude will be life as God intends it to be.

The Divine Programme for Human Life

The history of Israel is marked by a series of revolutions. Five of these are of vital importance, as stages on the way to the Christian Revolution. In each case we observe the same features, which may be described as follows: (a) A politico-religious problem becomes acute. (b) A prophet, or a number of prophets, utters the word of God, thus producing a crisis. (c) A revolution takes place, in the interest of the

poor, the oppressed, etc. (*d*) A literary monument emerges, in the shape of a code of law, which represents both the programme of the revolution and the faith behind it.

The five epochs which stand out, as having these characteristics, are those with which modern scholars associate the outstanding Hebrew codes : (*i*) Moses and the Decalogue. (*ii*) Elijah and the Book of the Covenant, i.e. *Exodus* xx to xxiii. (*iii*) Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Deuteronomy. (*iv*) Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and the Holiness Code, i.e. *Leviticus* xvii to xxvi. (*v*) Deutero-Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah i to viii, Trito-Isaiah, Malachi, and the Priestly Code, i.e. the whole Pentateuch.

These programmes are all distinguished by certain permanent features, of which the following are of special importance in relation to the New Testament. (*i*) The law is always based on good news of God, and begins with a call to religion. (*ii*) It is addressed to individuals as members of an elect people. (*iii*) From the decalogue onwards, social obligations are prescribed as the means of "realizing eschatology". ("That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.") (*iv*) The controlling idea in all the codes is that for which Josephus coined the expression *Theocracy*. (*v*) Sins of the spirit are warned against from the earliest period. (See my comment on the prohibition of coveting, in *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1934, p. 233.)

Fulfilment

The review of history which has been briefly outlined shews a religious community increasingly conscious of its mission among the nations of the world, sustained by the belief that divine government can be experienced here and now, and its principles embodied in rules of human conduct.

In this connexion a point of fundamental importance must be made, which has not received adequate attention. The prophets, to whose ministry the codes owe their existence, always regard themselves as fulfillers. To each of them, in his own day, God is actually present in all the glory and power

of His character as King. To Isaiah, for example, the Kingdom of God is at hand as vividly as to Jesus. It is precisely this experience which is enshrined in the word JEHOVAH. To pursue this thought would lead us too far from our present subject. It may be added, however, that the emotional attitude of the Psalmists to the Law has the same explanation. The moral apprehension of the God of Israel always had in it the quality of realized eschatology. That is why joy is the dominant note of the religion of Israel, and music its expression.

Jesus

From what has been said, it is evident that our Lord's ministry can be regarded as belonging to the history of Israel. In the Sermon on the Mount are found all the essential qualities of the Law and the Prophets. He goes further in the same direction. This means that His teaching contemplates social life in this world as a means of experiencing the Kingdom of God. There is a sense in which it is a recall to Moses.

And yet it is different. What is the difference? The answer may be given in one word. It is CHRISTIAN. What does that mean? It means having the divine Spirit. But others had made that claim. Jesus was quoting an old prophet, when He said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me"; and the old prophet was not mistaken. There is indeed something truly Messianic (i.e. Christian) in every good prophet. And yet the word belongs peculiarly to Jesus. He has unique authority. His first audience felt that. He speaks of the things of God from the inside. Still more, He draws His hearers into the family circle of God, in which He Himself holds a position of unique responsibility. "God is your Father", He says, "and there are ways in which you can be like Him". It is to the common people that He gives His message, and as He speaks, they become aware of a new power within themselves. It is the moving of the Spirit of God. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit" — that is how He is announced by the first evangelist (*Mark i. 8*).

His message and work are different, because He Himself is different, and the difference can only be expressed in terms of the divine. It is not so much that He is inspired, as that He is inspiring. He takes hold of the human situation at the bottom end, and turns the world upside down. "Blessed are ye poor : for yours is the Kingdom of God " (*Luke* vi. 20).

The law of Moses claims to be the expression of the will of the Creator. There is no need for that claim to be made for the Sermon on the Mount. It commends itself to every man's conscience. In the light of it we are able to test the validity of the Mosaic claim. Those who come under the influence of Jesus experience the process described in the first chapter of the Law (*Genesis* i. 27) as being created in the image of God.

THE EDITOR'S TRAVEL DIARY

In Germany

For those of us who have to talk and write so much about the conflict between the Christian Community and the forces of the modern world, but who do not actually live in the areas where the real battle is being waged, it is a great privilege to be allowed to visit the front and to have a share in the battle. That was for me the significance of the Evangelical Week in Darmstadt. To live through those critical and dramatic days in fellowship with the uncompromising and courageous leaders and members of the Confessional Church proved to be a truly inspiring experience. Hardly ever have I felt so strongly that the Church of Christ is not merely a castle in the air, but a reality in this world.

The Week had been forbidden, but it was nevertheless held. This meant, of course, that every one of the speakers from Germany (as well as the organizers) ran the risk of imprisonment; but there was not a single one who shirked his task to announce the Gospel. The result was that five of the leaders and speakers were indeed imprisoned, but that the Christian message was preached with very great power in word and deed. No one present on that evening will forget the address on "Jesus Christ as Lord" given in a church surrounded by policemen. And in singing "A safe stronghold" all of us who were at Darmstadt will always remember how terribly real the words of that hymn became to us, when we sang it to say good-bye to that same speaker as he was carried off to prison. A father said later: "This evening has done more for my son than a long series of Sunday School classes". Indeed, one such experience makes the pages of the Acts of the Apostles more alive than any commentary ever can.

The impression gained at Darmstadt was confirmed at other places in Germany. There is no need to pity the German Church. Its external and organizational condition is impossibly difficult, and in some ways hopeless. But we would be wrong to believe that the Church Conflict is a matter of Church administration, of Church committees, synods and Bishops. The real story of the Conflict is a story of revival and of new understanding of the implications of the Christian faith; and its stage is not governmental and Church offices, but the parishes.

The important and wonderful thing about the condition of the Church in Germany today is that its message is eagerly listened to by many who formerly would not listen to it. At the Evangelical Week at Kassel I spoke on one evening to 5,000 people of all classes and ages. The Church in Germany is not merely fighting for its existence; it is in a period of conquest and expansion. The real membership (as distinguished from the nominal membership) of the Church is growing.

As a World Student Christian Federation we have reason to be specially grateful for the fact that our fellow-members in Germany carry such a large share of the burden of responsibility in this great struggle. Our movement is by no means merely defensive in its attitude. In spite of all sorts of difficulties, the missionary work goes on quietly and constantly. If one way of approach has been closed, another one is sought and used. A way is always found, because there is a will to find one. Thus we need not fear for the future of our German Movement.

As I am writing these lines the news comes that Dr. von Thadden, the Chairman of the Movement, to whom we owe so much in the Federation, has been imprisoned together with other leaders of the Prussian "Bruderrat". But I need not change what I have written. For his imprisonment will only serve to underline the reality of the witness which he is giving constantly to students in Germany and in the whole Federation. We may all be proud of the fact that one of the leaders of our Federation is thus able to show so convincingly that he is willing to accept the consequences of his faith. Reinold von Thadden will want us to receive this news, not as a bit of sensation which gives us an opportunity to protest against a misguided government, but as a warning that Christian discipleship means paying a price and carrying a cross.

In Italy

The weeks spent in Italy were really a holiday; and so I looked at Italy as a tourist rather than as a Federation representative. This meant that I did not see many things which I should have seen on a Federation visit, but that I did see some things which I should otherwise not have seen.

A journey in Italy is even more a journey in time than a journey in space. At the Forum Romanum one sees a wall which has three different layers, for it served first for the Library of Augustus, then for an old Christian Church, and then for a Byzantine Church. And so it is with everything in Italy. The different periods seem quite unrelated to each other. History reveals itself as a great mystery. God is indeed hidden in the historical process.

You walk over the Via Appia or in the Villa of Hadrian, and you live in a time of external splendour, power and enjoyment of life. You descend into the catacombs, and you are suddenly transferred into a world in which all joy is bound up with the fact that a Jewish Messiah has overcome death and offers eternal life. You go to Assisi and find memories in the little Carceri monastery or in the paintings of Giotto of a mediaeval saint who loved this world, but in a way different from the Romans, for he loved it because of the things which are not made by men. Then in Florence or in the Vatican you come across the Renaissance, and once more man is the centre and even the great Christian themes are used or rather abused for the glorification of man in general and strong, powerful popes and princes in particular. (What a tragedy that the Vatican's most famous treasures date from the least Christian epoch in Christian art!) You move on to the baroque in St. Peter's, or in the Portiuncula Church, a huge imposing structure built over the tiny little chapel of St. Francis himself, and you find the worst of everything, the outward splendour of old Rome and the Renaissance without their sense of harmony, and the otherworldliness of the Middle Ages without their unsentimental realism and sense of reverence. And finally, you see the troops of volunteers of the Abyssinian war marching past, and you are in a different world again: a feverish world in which political values have come to swallow up all other values, a world which is engaged upon the impossible attempt to seek eternity within time. For the great paradox of Italy today is that, while the stones and the monuments shout it out that history means transitoriness, modern Italy stubbornly refuses to consider its own existence as a relative, historical fact, and insists on its own eternity.

Thus Italy becomes an impressive example of the great tragedy of the whole modern world, of man's seeking the abiding things where they cannot possibly be found, since man and culture do not carry eternity within themselves. At the same time, there is enough of another Italy, an Italy that points beyond itself — the mediaeval Churches, the pre-Renaissance art, and above all, nature: the hills of Tuscany and the Alps of Piedmont — to relieve these somewhat gloomy reflections of a holiday-maker.

V. 'T H.

THE STUDENT WORLD CHRONICLE

The Church as an Oecumenical Society

The following pages represent the concluding chapter of Dr. Visser 't Hooft's paper on "The Church and the Churches" in the Oxford Conference book "The Church and its Function in Society" ("The Church and its Function in Society", by Dr. J. H. Oldham and Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft. Allen and Unwin, London; Willet, Clark and Colby, Chicago; "Je Sers", Paris; Furche-Verlag, Berlin. Price: 8 s. 6 d.).

Is there a Church in the Churches ?

Our survey of the various doctrinal conceptions of the Church and of the position of the Churches in the world, leaves an impression of bewildering variety and lack of unity. It is, of course, true that an attempt to state the peculiar characteristics of each Church leads automatically to an over-emphasis on the points of difference and disagreement, and that there are many cases in which there is far more actual agreement between the Churches than their official utterances would seem to indicate. The Churches do not exist in isolation, but influence each other in numerous ways. And historical situations arise in which Churches of differing confessional backgrounds may be brought very near to one another. On the other hand, it must be admitted that there are also examples of the opposite development. Agreement in formulated conceptions does not necessarily mean fundamental and lasting agreement. There are Churches which are characterized by much inner conflict in spite of the fact that they possess generally-accepted standards of faith.

The fact of variety remains, then, a basic reality with which we have to deal. But it is not the only reality. The survey of the conceptions of the Church shows that there are certain important points upon which all those Churches which are taking part in the oecumenical movement are agreed. The chief of these seem to be the following :

1. All consider that the Church is not merely a human organization, but a community of which Jesus Christ is the Lord, and in

which He is at work. In other words, all conceive of the Church as an object of *faith*.

2. All agree that there is essentially only *one* Church, since there is only one Lord. As a reality of faith, the word Church has no plural.

3. All agree that the Church in which they believe is not exhaustively expressed in any given Church body.

The importance of these points should not be underestimated. That the Churches in "Life and Work" have in common these convictions about the nature of the Church means at least that they have a common point of reference. If they disagree, it is about the nature of one and the same thing, and not, as would be inevitable on a more inclusive basis, about a series of completely different things. It is only on the basis of a clear understanding that the Church is essentially different from any other religious or moral institution that the Oxford Conference can hope to find common answers relevant to the issues which have to be faced. And it is essential that in the utterance of the Conference, and in the life of the oecumenical movement, this common understanding should find clear and unequivocal expression.

But while these points of agreement are important, they do not lead us very far. For as soon as we try to implement these statements, and take them as the basis for common speech or action, we find that they bear different meanings according to the confessional background of the person who uses them. We agree that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church; but to some this means that His Lordship is a Lordship which does not admit the introduction into the message of the Church of any other authorities, such as tradition or natural law; to others it means, on the contrary, that tradition, in which they see the continuing life of Christ in the Church, and the orders of nature, in which they see the revelation of God's continuous working, are equally authoritative. Similarly, if it is said that there is only one Church, this implies for some Churches that only one visible Church is the true Church, but for others that no visible Church can claim to be *the* Church of Christ, since all Christian Churches together represent that reality. These examples might be multiplied *ad infinitum*; but the point is clear, namely, that our belief in the Church is both the basis which enables us to meet together, and at the same time the barrier which makes us unable to speak with a united voice.

It may be asked whether it is not possible to avoid this difficulty by leaving this issue aside, and by attempting to find agreement on

Christian ethics irrespective of doctrine and ecclesiology. In a sense, that is what the Stockholm Conference of 1925 attempted to do. Its committee meeting at Hälsingborg in 1922 stated in a letter to the Secretary of the Lausanne Conference Committee that its desire was to see Christians act corporately "as if they were one body in a visible community", for "this can be done by all equally without calling theological principles in question" (*ohne dass theologische Prinzipien angefochten werden*), and "doctrine separates, but service unites"¹. But the experience of the subsequent development of the oecumenical movement has shown that this position needs qualification. At Stockholm it was already becoming clear that no lasting understanding in the realm of ethics can be arrived at, unless there is some measure of understanding concerning the assumptions which underly all ethics. The presupposition that there is a fundamental unity between Christians in question of ethics proved to be an over-simplification of the real situation. As we have seen in our discussion of the relation of the Churches to their environment, the differences which exist in that realm are quite as considerable as the differences in the purely doctrinal realm. The need for a theological clarification became even more clear as the Stockholm movement found itself confronted with secular philosophies whose significance consisted precisely in the fact that they advocated, not merely a different morality, but a wholly different outlook upon life, which challenged Christianity in its very basis. At the same time, it was increasingly felt that a body representing the Churches would never be able to speak with any spiritual authority if it were to continue to eliminate from its discussions the basic question of the nature and the function of the Church. And so it has become inevitable that, as Dr. Oldham puts it, one of the questions of fundamental importance which are at the heart of the discussions on Church, Community and State, should be: "What is the nature and mission of the Church?"

It may further be asked whether the Oxford Conference should not at least deal with the question of the Church from a purely objective and neutral standpoint. If that means that the Conference should not choose one of the many different conceptions of the Church as the only true one, this question should, of course, be answered affirmatively. But if it means that the Oxford Conference should try to speak from a standpoint above and beyond the actual standpoints of the participating Churches, the question should be answered negatively. For a standpoint which transcends the

¹ Nathan Söderblom, *Pater Max Pribilla und die Oekumenische Erweckung*, 1931.

actual standpoints of the Churches does not exist. It might perhaps be constructed; but in that case the Oxford Conference would create a new and different Church, and no one will seriously maintain that that is its function. The difficult reality is that there is no "oecumenical" conception of the Church which can be accepted by all (or even by a large majority) of the Churches. The very essence of the oecumenical problem is precisely that the Churches are not at one on this basic matter, and that no Church can claim to represent in itself the solution of the oecumenical problem. It is a condition *sine qua non* of any oecumenical work that each Church, and the oecumenical movement as a whole, should realize this fact, and not try to cover it up by ambiguous language which means different things to different people. It is only by a frank facing of real differences that advance can be made in the realm of Christian co-operation and unity.

There is a theory of oecumenical relationships which solves the difficulty of the relations of the Churches to *the* Church by looking upon the existing Churches as branches of the one true Church. According to this theory, no Church by itself is *the* Church, but each Church is part of *the* Church, and the purpose of the oecumenical movement is to express the spiritual wealth, the variety, and the symphonic harmony, which are inherent in Christendom as a whole.

This view of the oecumenical situation has its partial justification in the New Testament image of the relation between the Body and its members. There is a sense in which the various Churches need each other, in order to be corrected by each other, and in order to express more adequately the fullness which is in Jesus Christ. But the branch theory means generally more than this, and stands for a conception of tolerance which owes its origins, not to the Bible, but to modern humanitarianism. Its weakness is that it isolates the question of *unity* from the question of *truth*. We have seen that the various conceptions of the Church are not merely supplementary to one another (although they are that to some extent), but also contradictory to one another. It is difficult, for instance, to speak of harmony when some Churches say: "The revelation of God is transmitted through the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition"¹, and other Churches say: "Jesus Christ as witnessed unto in the Scriptures is the one Word of God. We reject the false teaching that the Church should acknowledge other events and powers, sys-

¹ Statement agreed upon by the delegations of the Anglican and Rumanian Churches at Bucarest, 1935.

tems or truths in addition to and besides this one Word of God as source of its proclamation and as revelation of God ”¹. Although it should not be forgotten that these two statements are in so far incomparable that they have been formulated in very dissimilar situations, it is clear that they represent conceptions of the Church which differ fundamentally from each other. In other words, the reality of the situation demands that every one must choose between the existing doctrines, or (which amounts to the same thing) choose against all of them in favour of a new and different conception. The branch theory finally denies the validity of those conceptions of the Church which claim to be *true*, and not merely to be aspects of a many-sided spiritual harmony. And this is in fact what all Churches claim, and must claim, though they claim it in different ways and in relation to different doctrines. At any rate, the advocates of the branch theory must recognize that in the oecumenical realm their view of the Church is just one among many others, and that it cannot claim to be *the* oecumenical theory.

It is precisely because we have to do with nothing less than the Church which is the Body of Christ that we dare not think in terms of opportunism or compromises. The reasons why we should bury our divisions, and present a truly united front to the world, are indeed pressing and weighty. No one who has thought through the issues which will be discussed at the Oxford Conference can fail to feel this, and feel it deeply. We should therefore always ask ourselves : Are our differences really of such importance that we dare not give them up ? And we should not have the slightest hesitation in doing so, in fact, we are obliged to do so, if we can do so without sacrificing our loyalty to Christ. But we are no less forced to ask the other question : Can we give up the truth for which our Church stands without becoming disloyal to *the* Church, that is, to the truth which Christ Himself has revealed to us ? For it is the duty of each Church to care desperately for the truth of God ; if it ceases to do so, it ceases to be a Church with a message of God, and becomes simply a philosophical institution, which has no longer a message of salvation for men or for the world.

The position is, then, that we believe together that there is a Church in the Churches, but that we cannot say together how and where it exists, or how and where it functions. For some, the marks of the Church are the traditional ones of acceptance of the creeds and the episcopal order ; for others, they are in the exclusively Biblical

¹ Declaration of the Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church at Barmen, 1931.

purity of doctrine ; for others, in the personal faith of the Church's membership ; for others again, in complete freedom of doctrine and worship. It is therefore, humanly speaking, impossible to discover how out of these different approaches we may come to one common conviction as to what the Church in the Churches really is, and how it should be concretely expressed in oecumenical form.

There is no "way out" of this situation. For every so-called "way out" proves in fact to be an element which complicates the situation even more. We are therefore obliged to recognize the fact of our *disagreement* as to the *nature* of the Church as well as the fact of our *agreement* as to the *reality* of the Church. This means, not that we should cease to work for unity, but that we should cease to seek to force the issue of unity. Our present *impasse* is a sign that unity cannot be made by men, but can only be acknowledged and received when God actually gives it. It is with unity as with all the gifts of God : we can prepare for it, we can pray for it, we can watch for it, but we cannot bring it into being. Unity is not achieved ; but it *happens* when men listen together to God, and when He is willing to give it to them.

In the meantime, the Church in the Churches, or better, the Church Universal, remains a reality in which we *believe*. As such it is the great critical principle in the life of all Churches. The very great value of the oecumenical movement consists in the fact that it reminds us by its very existence of the challenge of that criticism. In its light we see more clearly how much our Churches have become entangled with the world of nations and races and classes, and how little they have lived up to their faith in the Church Universal. In its light also we discover what elements in our divisions are no more than very relative cultural or other human idiosyncrasies which have no right to hold the Churches apart. In its light we become troubled in our consciences about the self-satisfaction and complacency of our Churches, and learn to pray that God may give us the unity which we ourselves are unable to realize.

Can the Churches speak and act together ?

At first sight it seems quite superfluous to ask whether the Churches can speak and act together ; for ever since the Stockholm Conference the Churches have been co-operating through the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work and other oecumenical bodies. But in the light of our survey of the conceptions of the Church and of the oecumenical situation, the question arises : What does this

co-operation mean ? Does it mean that the Church in the Churches has in fact found its embodiment, in spite of the doctrinal and ecclesiastical barriers between the Churches ? Or is this co-operation simply a question of machinery which has nothing to do with the Church-as-such ? It is important to face these questions ; for it is evident that our view of the significance and character of the Oxford Conference, as well as of the work of the Universal Christian Council, will largely depend on the answers given to them.

The kind of oecumenical activity of which the Oxford Conference is an expression can be conceived in two ways. It is possible to conceive of it as a process of study, research and discussion, the purpose of which is to help individual Churches and individual Christians to fulfil their Christian duty in relation to the world, but not to speak in any sense as representing the Church of Christ. There is much to be said for this position. It is first of all a modest position, which does not arouse expectations which it is hard to meet. The Churches have indeed much to learn from each other ; and a pooling of Christian thought concerning the present world situation, and the Christian task in that situation, is so useful and timely that this purpose alone seems a quite sufficient justification for the holding of a World Meeting. Another advantage of this view would seem to be that it is based on a realistic acceptance of the fact that at the present moment no oecumenical conference can claim to speak officially for the Churches or to legislate for them.

But does this conception truly represent the actual situation ; and does it do justice to the demands which are rightly being made upon the oecumenical movement ? There are two reasons why it seems inadequate :

In the first place, the Oxford Conference is composed of representatives appointed by the Christian Churches. And Churches are not like governments or scientific societies, which can meet without committing themselves. Churches are bodies which exist to proclaim the truth of God ; and it is therefore their function, when they meet individually or together, to bear witness to the message which has been entrusted to them. Representatives of Churches can never meet without at least attempting to live up their main obligation, which is *to be the Church*, and to announce the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the world.

In the second place, the particular *purpose* of the Oxford Conference demands that, in addition to devoting itself to study and research, the Conference should be ready, if God wills, to speak on behalf of the "*Ekklesia Theou*". This purpose is to give guidance

to men and women in a world which has lost the way, and which is frantically trying to meet its problems with pagan or semi-pagan philosophies and principles. What this world needs today is not in the first place new ideas or theories, but the message of divine authority which the Church alone can bring, and the demonstration of the reality of the Church. Over against false conceptions of state and community, the Church needs to affirm the existence of a God-given community which transcends all human divisions, and that *as a reality* and not merely as an ideal. This implies that the Conference, if it is at all to meet the opportunity and challenge of the hour, is obliged to affirm that it is itself an expression of that community.

It must, however, be admitted that this second conception of the oecumenical movement and of the Oxford Conference seems to raise as many questions as it solves. For, as we have already seen, it is impossible to maintain that the Churches which will take part in the Oxford Conference have a common conception of the Church; and it is out of the question to claim that the utterances of the Oxford Conference will have official ecclesiastical authority, or that the Conference is at all comparable with a veritable Oecumenical Council.

But is it really the case that the Conference must be either a purely non-committal body of Church leaders, which registers agreements and disagreements, or a fully-authorized and representative body, which speaks officially in the name of the Churches? It would seem that there is a third possibility, which is harder to define, but which is nevertheless as real as the two other ones. This third conception is based on a recognition of the two basic facts in the oecumenical situation: the fact that all the Churches concerned believe in the Church as a reality which transcends any given historical Church body and which is brought into existence, not by men, but by God; and the other fact that these same Churches cannot at present be brought together into one united Church.

It is impossible for the Oxford Conference to claim that its voice is the voice of the Church; but it is equally impossible for it to *deny* that it is such a voice. The *positive claim* is impossible because it can be made only when the Churches are ready to be re-united into one body in which all members accept each other as full members of the Church, and in which there is a basic agreement on the faith and order of the Church. The *denial* is impossible, because it would deny in advance that at the Oxford Conference (where more than two or three will be gathered in the name of Christ) Christ

Himself may be present, and that the Oxford Conference may illustrate the truth : "*Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia*".

In these circumstances, the right attitude for the Conference to take is to leave open the question whether and how it represents the Church, but at the same time to be ready to be used as the Church of God, if God wants to use the Conference in such a way. Concretely this means that the Conference should not only register points of agreement and disagreement, but also affirm the basic message of the Christian Church to the world, and thus show that it is concerned not merely with trends of thought, with theories and conceptions, but above all with the witness to the reality of the Kingdom of God which has come to the world in Jesus Christ. Thus the Conference would not only speak *about* the Church, but (*Deo volente*) would manifest the living actuality of the Church, and its relevance to the world.

If the Conference were to think of itself in this way, its authority would reside, not in official prerogatives or the power to represent and commit individual Churches, but simply in the truth of whatever it has to say. Orthodox and Catholics and Protestants can meet on this ground. They may disagree as to how the truth which they seek together in the Biblical Revelation is finally distinguished and recognized, some using as their criterion the acceptance of truth by the Church as a whole (*Sobornost'*; or the principle of *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est*), and others putting their confidence in the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit; but they can agree that in some way which we cannot define together, the Church of Christ may speak through the Oxford Conference.

It is obvious that the Oxford Conference, so conceived, would in no way become a substitute for a truly united Church. For an united Church would be characterized by a great deal more than this. It would speak on the basis of substantial agreement in essentials, while Oxford can at best speak only in spite of fundamental disagreements. Only a United Church would be able to give a fully adequate demonstration of the meaning of the Church, as in it there would be the full fellowship of witness and of sacraments in common.

It is possible that the oecumenical movement in the present situation may be little more than an international humanitarian organization. It is also possible that, though it is not the Church of Christ in its fullness, it may be an "earnest" of the Church of Christ which is in the Churches, and which is more than the Churches. Whether the Oxford Conference will represent the first or the second of these two possibilities we cannot know in advance. But in prayer and work we can prepare ourselves to be used as the Church, and to give a common witness, in order that the world may know that Jesus Christ has been sent by God.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Riddle of Parable

THE PARABLES OF THE GOSPELS and their Meaning for Today. By
Hugh Martin, M. A. *S.C.M. Press, London, 1937. Price : 5s.*

The Rev. Hugh Martin knows how to make the results of modern scholarship available to the ordinary reader in simple and lively form. His book is intended not for specialists, but for students. His object has been, to use his own words, "to discover the original meaning of the parables, and then to apply its message to the lives of men and women in our modern world". Thus, each parable is replaced in its Oriental setting; an attempt is made to find out the fundamental truth it is meant to convey and apply it to our own condition.

The strange thing about the parables is that they are often spoken of as if they were the simplest way in which spiritual truth could be conveyed. And at the same time no stories in the Gospels have raised more controversial statements.

Mr. Martin acknowledges this. And after having said "that Jesus used the parable method because it was the clearest and most forceful way of bringing home His message" (p. 20), he has to concede : "This is not to say that the lesson of the parables is obvious. No one can study the commentators without being amazed by the divergent meanings that scholars can draw out of the same verses. Part of the trouble is due to Western ignorance of the Oriental setting. More is often due to theological presuppositions which the parables must be made to fit. But most of the trouble is caused by trying to be too clever and by insisting upon treating all the parables as if they were allegories. Yet even to the sincere and well-equipped modern scholar there is much that is puzzling, and for all of us the parables point the way over uncharted seas. The mind of Jesus is too great for us to compass" (p. 23).

All this is true. And yet, is there not something more to be said ? If parables are clear to an unbiassed mind aware of Oriental ways and customs, why did the disciples find them so difficult ?... Why this solemn and repeated urge to "hearken" and "take heed" ? Are Jesus' words about "the mystery of the kingdom" (Mark iv. 11-12) an incidental and misinterpreted remark, or do they rather

give the clue to all the parables of the kingdom ?... Our whole interpretation of the parables will be deeply influenced by the position we take on just that point. Jesus did not lightly "cast his pearls"; have not most of his stories a hidden meaning ? and are they not meant to challenge us to hard thinking ?

Mr. Martin stresses the fact in his introduction that "Jesus was no mere ethical teacher propounding moral lessons. He was, and knew that He was, Christ, Messiah, Saviour. He had come at the fulness of the times. It was an hour of crisis — *the* hour of crisis in human history... History is either "before Christ" or "in the year of our Lord"... There are few of the parables that do not reveal the presence of the hour of destiny".

We fully agree; but we do somewhat feel that in his practical dealing with the parables Mr. Martin has not drawn all the consequences which might have been drawn from his own statement. He insists on the ethical meaning of the parables, and rightly so; but those of us who cannot help seeing the parables in a more "eschatological" perspective will miss a certain sense of immediacy. To us most of the parables are not so much concerned with ethical behaviour as meant to be a solemn warning that "the Kingdom has come nigh".

For instance, is the parable of the Sower mainly concerned with the SOWER or — as Mr. Martin would like to put it — with the FOUR SOILS ? with the Divine Coming or with human ill will and good will ? Is it meant to convey some ethical teaching (improve our soil ?...), or is it a solemn warning that "the light came into the world but the world received it not" ?... "but to those who received it, it gave the power to become children of God" ?...

These are some of the questions we should like to ask the author. And our raising them proves that his book challenges our thinking.

S. de D.

"Choose Ye This Day..."

NONE OTHER GODS. By W. A. Visser 't Hooft. *Harpers and Brothers, New York; S. C. M. Press, London.* Price : \$. 1.50 ; 5s.

I put down this book with new hope that it will not be impossible to discover a Christian message which is truly ecumenical and yet which meets the most pressing needs of the contemporary world. Visser 't Hooft has so wonderfully in his own work transcended the external barriers which make it very difficult for those of us on different Continents and with different religious traditions to understand each other that he has been able to say the most important things

in a way which would be acceptable to vast numbers of Christians on all Continents.

In the first chapter of the book the chief theme is the nature of the authority of God's revelation in Christ. It is here that current Christian discussion usually proceeds by reducing the alternatives to two and then caricaturing the one which is rejected. Even Visser 't Hooft does not escape this. He puts in sharp contrast the position according to which we find in Christ the center by which all the rest of experience is illumined and therefore which is independent of any testing in terms of reason or common experience and the position according to which I set my own idea with presumptuous human autonomy up as the standard by which Christ is to be tested. There is still another position which is less sharply defined but which seems to me to be nearer to the truth. It involves both a decision for Christ as the norm and a recognition that we cannot persist in such a decision unless at many points it brings coherence into our understanding of all of life and unless it stands up under rational, moral and practical tests. Those tests are, however, not the setting up of my *idea* as an autonomous individual, but the correspondence between Christian truth and facts or realities which are *given* in the same objective way in which revelation is given. It is not a sufficient answer to show that people disagree about these facts and realities; they disagree even more about revelation. But in a later chapter the author suggests a correction of his own theory of revelation when he emphasizes what he calls in relation to the problem of the university "the fundamental unity of all truth".

It is when Visser 't Hooft outlines the content of Christian faith rather than one theory concerning its authority that he makes his greatest contribution. Here one can only note his emphasis upon the God-centeredness of Christian faith, upon the Gospel as the way in which God deals with human weakness and sin, upon the new life "in hope" and "in faith" which can be a present reality for the Christian, upon the contradiction between Christian faith and the modern world with its values and its faiths, upon prayer as that in which "Christian truth ceases to appear as truth-in-the-air and becomes truth-for-us", upon the Bible as the source of guidance concerning God's will in connection with our knowledge of the factual setting of each problem which demands obedient decision, upon the Christian Community as the source of contemporary Christian insight and as that without which "the world is turned back to the life of the jungle".

* The discussion of the ways in which Christians should deal with the problems of civilization and especially with the new "mass

movements " is extraordinarily sound. Visser 't Hooft urges that the Christian Community should refuse to let itself be drawn into the conflict of ideologies. According to the Christian perspective, behind the present struggle between fanatical political movements controlled by myths there are " just human beings, uncertain and frightened human beings, who are each turning in some way or another to solve the problem of living ". The Church should help people to see the realities of political life and produce " unromantic, sober-minded citizens and politicians who know of the relativity of human solutions, but who continue in spite of all discouragement to seek for some more justice, some more obedience to the commands of Christ ".

Americans who read this book will find that there is in it a statement of Christianity which they can understand and which preserves the values for which many of those who find some recent Continental interpretations of Christianity unconvincing would contend. Even more than in the case of anything else its author has done I admire the degree to which it combines intellectual clarity and religious power, adherence to a distinctive point of view and remarkable breadth of understanding. Also, there runs through it what I can only call a degree of human compassion which one often misses in theological discussions of the state of the world.

J. C. B.

Faith and Order Reports

DIE KIRCHE JESU CHRISTI UND DAS WORT GOTTES : ein Studienbuch über das Wort Gottes als Lebensgrund und Lebensform der Kirche. Herausgegeben von D. Wilhelm Zoellner und D. Dr. Wilhelm Stählin. *Furche-Verlag, Berlin*, 1937. Price : RM. 3.80 (paper covers) ; RM. 4.80 (cloth boards).

THE MINISTRY AND THE SACRAMENTS. Edited by Dr. R. Dunkerley and Dr. A. C. Headlam. *S. C. M. Press, London*, 1937. Price : 18s.

REPORTS OF THE COMMISSION ON THE CHURCH'S UNITY IN LIFE AND WORSHIP : (1) *The Communion of Saints*. Prepared by Gaius Jackson Slosser. (2) *The Meanings of Unity*. Prepared by Angus Dun. (3) *The Non-theological Factors in the Making and Unmaking of Church Union*. Prepared by Willard L. Sperry. (4) *A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, 1927-1936*. Prepared by H. Paul Douglass. (5) *Next Steps on the Road to a United Church*. Prepared by William Adams Brown. *Harper and Brothers, New York and London*, 1937.

There has for long enough been an impression in many people's minds that the preparations for the Edinburgh Conference were not nearly so careful as those for the Oxford Conference; and all kinds of odious comparisons have often been drawn. But impression and comparisons alike were for the most part based on ignorance or misunderstanding. The volumes which have arrived just as we go to press are proof positive of the most impressive care and thoroughness with which the preparations for the Edinburgh Conference have been carried out.

The main reason for the false impression is that the publicity given to the preparations for Edinburgh has been very small. Nor does the kind of subject with which they deal have the same immediate appeal to a wider public which other oecumenical endeavours can command. But "publicity-value" or "box-office appeal" are not the final criterion of the importance of such studies. And the appearance of the volumes here under review is an oecumenical event of the very first importance.

The first book, *Die Kirche Jesu Christi und das Wort Gottes* (The Church of Jesus Christ and the Word of God), is the work of a Commission of Theologians centred in Germany, and discusses the Word of God as the basis and form of the life of the Church. It has three main parts, which study respectively the Word of God and the Church; the Word of God and the Ministry; and the Word of God and the Churches. It contains nine articles in German, five in French, and one in English. Since translation is unfortunately necessary, we hope that an all-English edition may speedily appear; for it is just in the field covered by this book that the Anglo-Saxon most requires the contribution of his Continental brethren.

The second book, *The Ministry and the Sacraments*, is the work of a Commission of Theologians centred in England. It has four main parts (apart from the *Report* of the Commission, which occupies 44 pages at the beginning): the Views of Modern Churches; Biblical Basis; Historical Study; Constructive Statements (including "a review of the problems" by the Bishop of Gloucester, Chairman of the Commission). It is qualitatively as well as quantitatively a really solid milestone on the thorny way to reconciliation in this most debated of all oecumenical problems.

The third series of books is the work of a Commission of Theologians centred in the United States of America. With characteristic practical forethought, this Commission on the Church's Unity in Life and Worship has issued its Report in five separate short books, which are convenient to handle, and no less impressive in quality

than their bigger brothers with which we have just dealt. Their titles are a sufficient indication of the main concerns of the Commission.

It is impossible here to give an adequate analysis or appreciation of the contents of all these books; but time and study will, we are sure, only confirm our first impression that their publication marks the beginning of a new and still more fruitful stage in the unobtrusive but fundamental work of the "Faith and Order" Movement.

D. G. M. P.

Moslem Women

MOSLEM WOMEN ENTER A NEW WORLD. By Ruth Frances Woodsmall. Publications of the American University of Beirut, Social Science Series. *Round Table Press, New York; G. Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London.* Price: \$. 3.—; 12s. 6d.

Miss Ruth Woodsmall is a great lover of the East; when one reads her book one feels she has had but one aim: to look, listen and understand. And she knows how to look and how to listen; her book contains an amazing amount of first-hand information collected during her many years in Turkey and her many journeys through the Near East and East: Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq, Iran and, last but not least, India.

A book so full of facts might be dull; but they are woven in like so many brightly coloured threads to compose a picture of rare vividness. We are faced with the smile of the fully-emancipated Turkish girl, followed at some distance by her sisters from Egypt and Iran, while the Palestine Moslem woman more than ever hides behind the veil and North India slowly moves from complete purdah towards free co-education. It is an interesting fact that the Koran did not definitely order harem life and the veil; thus it remains a matter of custom, but not strictly speaking of religion.

Miss Woodsmall studies very closely the bearing of a new, westernized conception of life on the whole status of Moslem women: on marriage, polygamy, divorce, and in the realm of education, professional life, health, etc. The change is taking place with more swiftness in some countries than in others and, of course, in big centres more than in provincial towns; but the stream of new life seems irresistible.

Any one who has first-hand knowledge of Eastern women will share Miss Woodsmall's admiration for the simplicity and ease with which women who had been secluded for centuries have adapted themselves to new circumstances and, all at once in some countries,

entered public life, without losing anything of their traditional charm and poise. We share with the author the conviction that we Western women have much to learn from the women of the East. And at the same time, one knows that for many among them the way will still be a long way, and the privileges of education and freedom will for some time to come remain for the few.

Should one not acknowledge that it is where the power of Islam had already broken down, as in Turkey, that the emancipation of women has become most complete? In other countries it has been attempted to grant certain safeguards to women (in matters of marriage, divorce, endowment) without breaking the existing social and legal frame imposed by Islamic law. But is not such an attempt a hopeless one? "Among the upper classes social inequalities are being ameliorated by the growing pressure of public opinion. But the Moslem women of the masses seem destined to continue to suffer serious social handicaps as long as the authority of Islam to determine the social system is not questioned" (p. 130).

If this is true, a question inevitably occurs to our mind: granted that the old type of society is doomed, on what foundations will the new society be built? On what foundations will *the family of tomorrow* be built? The author has limited herself to an impartial survey of the situation. The quotation given above is followed by a chapter on "Education — The Key to Progress". Is education the way out? No one doubts the value of education, resulting in new interests, in culture and character. And yet . . . Suddenly there comes back to my memory the enthusiastic cry of the French poet: "To open schools means to empty jails!" Fifty years ago, education was looked upon in Europe as the universal panacea. Today we Europeans are more sceptical. What do we mean by "progress"? What should be the aim and basis of "education"? Our modern West has started breaking one by one under slow and steadfast pressure the old social standards of the East; in the long run, probably none will resist. This will mean deliverance from social bondage in many ways. But how will what we have involuntarily broken be replaced?

For a Christian there is only one answer. But when we are faced with the amazing speed with which history moves in our day, and age-long traditions suddenly give way to be replaced in most cases by purely secularized ways of life, how can we escape, we Westerners, a heavy sense of responsibility . . . and failure?

This is one of the many questions on which one is tempted to ponder while reading this very fascinating book.

S. DE D.

Notes on Contributors and Articles

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The Book Reviews are by John C. Bennett, Professor at Auburn Theological Seminary, U.S.A., and Suzanne de Dietrich and Denzil G. M. Patrick, of the W.S.C.F. Staff.

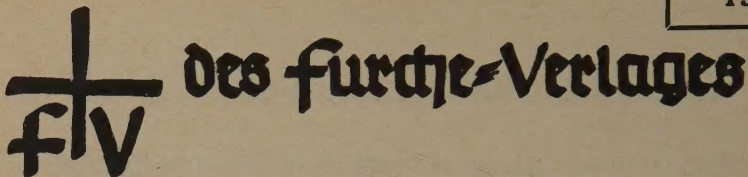
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In view of the urgency of that issue for the life of the W.S.C.F., the next number of *The Student World* will be devoted to the subject "*Christian Fellowship and Political Ideologies*", and not to the subject previously announced.

Die Neuerschreibungen

Juli

1937



DER MENSCH IM WIDERSPRUCH

Die christliche Lehre vom wahren und vom wirklichen Menschen. Von D. *Emil Brunner*, Professor an der Universität Zürich. 576 S. RM. 10.80. Leinen RM. 12.80.

Im Verständnis des Menschseins entscheidet sich Glaube oder Unglaube, darin, ob Gott oder der Mensch im Mittelpunkt steht. *Emil Brunner* gibt hier eine christliche Lehre vom Menschen und leistet damit einen einzigartigen Beitrag für das Verständnis des christlichen Glaubens.

DIE KIRCHE JESU CHRISTI UND DAS WORT GOTTES

Ein Studienbuch über das Wort Gottes als Lebensgrund und Lebensform der Kirche. Herausgegeben von D. *Wilhelm Zoellner* und D. Dr. *Wilhelm Stählin*. 240 S. RM. 3.80. Leinen RM. 4.80.

Das bedeutsame ökumenische Werk geht jeden an, der in der Arbeit an Kirche und Gemeinde steht.

ES STEHET GESCHRIEBEN !

Eine Untersuchung über die Grenzen der Theologie und die Autorität des Wortes. Von Pfarrer Lic. Dr. *Helmut Echternach*, Dozent a.d. Universität Greifswald. 80 S. Kaschurbd. RM. 2.80.

Dies Buch ist von grösster Bedeutung in einer Zeit, die erkannt hat, dass Kirche nur auf der Schrift gebaut werden kann. Es bringt entscheidende Einsichten über Urtext und Lutherbibel.

MARTIN LUTHER : SCHMALKALDISCHE ARTIKEL

Das Glaubenszeugnis der Schmalkaldischen Artikel für die Gegenwart. Textausgabe mit Einführung und Auslegung von Dr. *Hanns Lilje*. 128 S. Leinen RM. 2.—.

Luthers Schmalkaldische Artikel sind eines der wichtigsten Zeugnisse der Reformation. Die Neuausgabe bringt ausser dem Luthertext eine ausführliche geschichtliche Einführung und eine Vergegenwärtigung des Textes für uns Heutige.

DER CHRISTUS DER GEMEINDE

Eine Einführung in das Evangelium nach Lukas. Von D. Dr. *Leonhard Fendt*, Professor a.d. Universität Berlin. 250 S. RM. 4.80. Leinen RM. 5.80.

Diese Einführung in das Lukasevangelium ist besonders bemerkenswert durch die grosse Linie der lebendigen Darstellung, die das Buch für jeden Leser, auch für den theologisch nicht Vorgebildeten, lesbar macht.

TRUEBSAL SCHAFFT HERRLICHKEIT

Sieben Predigten von *Hermann Weber*, Pfarrer a. d. Christuskirche in Freiburg Br. 56 S. Geh. RM. 1.20.

Auch in diesen letzten Predigten spricht *Hermann Weber* nie von sich selbst und von den eigenen Leiden und Kämpfen, sondern nur von der Herrlichkeit Christi und von der Kraft des Wortes Gottes. Sie werden ihren Dienst an vielen tun.

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